



# The Concept of Education According to John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til and Its Implications in The Design of Early Childhood Character Curriculum

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## ABSTRACT

This research discusses a comparative study between the educational concepts of John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til to find a concept of education that teaches children not only to achieve intellectual intelligence but also to shape the child's character and make the child a person who fears God. This research uses a qualitative method, a literature study research approach (library). Based on the results of the research, the author makes a curriculum design that tends to Van Til's concept of education because in the idea of education according to Van Til, he emphasizes education based on God's Word, which is the basis for building human character and making children as individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also intellectually intelligent. The results of this research indicate that there is a sharp difference between the views of John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til regarding education. John Dewey focused education on human intelligence alone. Education must introduce children to who their Creator is so that children live responsibly towards their Creator. Education that intervenes in faith, education that applies Bible integration teaches children moral values and character to become God-fearing individual's fear of God.

## INTRODUCTION

Two educational philosophers, namely John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til have their respective perspectives on education about what is needed in education and what is not needed in education. The concept of education according to Van Til is seen from a Christian perspective based on God's Word. We must be educated to know God and to glorify God while the concept of education according to John Dewey is built on the philosophy of pragmatism and progressivism. John Dewey held the view that the supernatural (KBBi, 2022) will only become a hindrance to the further progress of mankind so it needs to be abandoned (Myers, 2017; Stone, 2016; Van Eyghen, 2018). Dewey's entire educational system is a philosophy of pragmatism and progressivism. There is nothing supernatural, nothing absolute. Dewey believed that institutionalized religion was the greatest enemy of civilization. God must be removed from the human mind. If the term Allah is to be defended, it must be used to denote an active relationship between the real and the ideal (Topalli et al., 2013). Dewey is also a pioneer of the philosophy of progressivism which is part of the philosophical flow of pragmatism created by a philosopher named William James, where this philosophical understanding of pragmatism greatly influenced John Dewey's educational concept.

The epistemology of pragmatism states that truth is relative and is determined by the scientific method of the usefulness of something, there is no absolute truth (Tung 2015). Truth in pragmatism is measured by the criteria of whether the concept stated is

useful, functional, and functions in everyday life or not. While the philosophy of progressivism pioneer was John Dewey himself. The influence of progressivism on education is influenced by two doctrines, namely the doctrine of evolution and the doctrine of materialism the form of the theory became evolutionistic materialism or naturalism. This flow emerged as a reaction to traditional education (education that emphasizes strict formal methods, instructional learning, and teacher oriented) (Tung, 2013). John Dewey defines education as a process of forming an intelligent approach to the natural world and fellow human beings. For John Dewey salvation in the world will be achieved through education, no longer divine intervention from the other world (Baldacchino, 2014; Lindblad, 2018; Papadopoulos, 2012; Pedwell, 2017; Wu & Wenning, 2016).

Responding to the educational concept of modern philosophers, Van Til said that the life principle of a believer is totally different from that of an unbeliever. Non-Christian education is education without God (*Godless education*). Education without God is also non-Christian or anti-Christian education (Louis & Van, 2016). What is most important to us in education that absolutely should not be ignored, is actually abandoned altogether. Education without God ignores or denies that man was created to be accountable to God. This implies that sin is not a violation of God's law. Therefore, Christ does not need to die in our place. Therefore, non-Christian education or education without God will be humanistic, human-centered. Often non-Christian educators completely discard the idea of a definite goal of education (Louis & Van, 2016). For Van Til, Christian education is education based on God's Word, not just results. *Evolution* happens by chance and does not have any eternal significance. If a man does not have to live for God then he lives for himself.

As Christians, we know what the purpose of education is. We also know what education should contain. Finally, we know that genuinely Christian methods must be used to teach truly Christian educational content. Christian teachers realize that there is not a single "fact" that can really be known and then led unless it is determined under the light of God's revelation. Understanding this difference, the curriculum plan must be centered on God. Humans exist for God (Louis & Van, 2016). The statements above about Van Til are his concept of education in his book entitled *foundation of Christian Education*. From the concept of education according to the two characters, namely Dewey and Van Til, the author feels that these two concepts need to be compared with theories to find the differences and weaknesses and the advantages of each concept of the two characters. For the author of the concept of education, John Dewey, when applied in the educational curriculum in schools, it will produce humans who are cognitively intelligent but not superior in terms of character. Meanwhile, according to the author, good education does not only talk about academic values and good achievements that can be achieved but also has good character values in it.

This research also departs from various problems with the character of children that the author observes from his teaching experience at school, as well as from social media that contains news about the moral decline of school children. This makes the authors feel concerned about the characters of children who are less commendable, so that the authors are called to assist teachers in educating children's character by creating a curriculum for Early Childhood Education (ECE). The author sees that many ECE children today like to argue and rebel against their parents or even against their own teachers. There are many young children who have disrespectful behavior towards their parents even though God commanded that children have an attitude of respect for

their parents (Exodus 20:12). There is inappropriate pronunciation of words for children their age, lack of sympathy to help peers, and many more. The author also thinks far ahead about the impacts that will occur due to character education that is neglected from an early age. This can be very serious and concerning.

A character education activist named Ratna Megawangi is known as one of the intellectuals who is very productive in delivering character education in Indonesia. Ratna assumes that early age is a milestone in character education for children and adolescents. According to Ratna, character education should start at an early age. This is based on the fact that early childhood is a golden period that becomes the momentum in determining the laying of the foundation for character education. The character foundations embedded in early childhood will evaluate the success of the character planting process in the following periods (Bailey et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2017; Rao & Chen, 2009; Slot, 2018). This is in line with psychologists who say that a very important period for laying the foundations of a personality that will give color when a child becomes an adult is in the early stages of the child's life. The behavior formed in the early years of a child's life will determine how far he manages to adjust to life when he becomes an adult. Therefore, it is very important to form moral values, character and religion as the beginning of achieving a child's self-identity, attitudes and habits (Zubaedi & Endang, 2020).

Character education needs to be instilled from childhood or preschool. This is based on the consideration that childhood 0-6 years is a golden period of growth and development. This is the most appropriate time to leverage and develop all the potential that exists in children. Developmental psychology emphasizes the importance of nurturing and mentoring issues in the phase of this golden age. At this time it is what will determine a person's development in adulthood (Zubaedi & Endang, 2020). One of the most important things for children is to pay attention to their morals. The reason is that children will grow and develop according to the morality that the educator has been accustomed to since childhood, be it freedom, anger, pressure, caution, thoroughness, greed, carelessness, indulgence and so on (Zubaedi & Endang, 2020). If from an early age the child has been educated with an education that ignores character values, then all these habits will grow into a deep-rooted trait or attitude that will be difficult to remove when he is an adult. If we really want to avoid these negative conditions, then we need to educate, shape the character of early childhood. If not, then it is not surprising that we will witness the morality of the behavior of people who are deviant and all that is caused by educational mistakes that have not succeeded in shaping their morals from an early age (Zubaedi & Endang, 2020).

Based on the considerations above, the authors chose to create a curriculum for early childhood because this is the age of golden age in order to help ECE teachers in shaping the characters of Indonesian children with a curriculum based on Christian religious education to build a stronger character because it is based on the truth of God's Word. God's Word is a powerful word that guides many people to the right path through thinking, speaking to concrete actions that can produce good character. Based on God's word in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. God commands us to educate our children over and over again whether we are sitting down, or on our way, or when we are lying down or getting up. This Word again emphasizes to us how important it is to educate children again and again so that they do not forget the things that are taught and so that their character becomes stronger.

Education that only touches and develops aspects of knowledge, of course, is not enough to produce superior personalities, but it also requires character education that touches aspects of knowledge, feelings, and actions. Authors need a Christ-centered education that leads to truth and pays attention to the holistic aspects of early childhood development. Finally, the author hopes that the presence of this scientific work can contribute to ECE teachers in Indonesia, especially Christian educators for the development of early childhood character learning in schools. The research aims to discuss a comparative study between the educational concepts of John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til to find a concept of education that teaches children not only to achieve intellectual intelligence but also to shape the child's character and make the child a person who fears God.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The scientific research method is a scientific way to obtain data with certain purposes and uses. The scientific method means that this research is based on scientific characteristics, namely rational, empirical and systematic. Rational means the research was carried out in ways that make sense. Empirical means that the ways in which they are carried out can be observed by the human senses. Systematic means that the process used uses logical steps (Sugiyono, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Research procedure.

The data obtained from research results can be used to understand the problem, find a way out of a problem, and anticipate problems and to make progress (Sugiyono, 2017). This research uses a comparative study. According to Sudarto, a comparative study is a philosophical study that compares the views of philosophers or thoughts (Sudarto, 2002). The purpose of this comparative research is to find out and get answers whether there is a comparison or not of the object being studied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thoughts and theories John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til have their own point of view on education and background of thought.

### The Concept of Education According to John Dewey

John Dewey formulated education above philosophy. The process shapes an intelligent and emotional approach to the natural world and to our fellow human beings. Therefore, education is necessary to help people to reflect on the problems that arise in the world around them and society and equip them to implement the changes that arise as a result of that thinking (Banks, 2014; Barrett et al., 2013; Benjamin & Vaught, 2018; DeJaeghere, 2018; Kelley & Knowles, 2016; Slot, 2018).

## **Understanding that influenced John Dewey**

John Dewey was an American philosopher of thought and had a lot of influence in the world of education. Dewey was a pioneer of progressivism theory with other positions in the school of pragmatism.

### **Philosophy of Pragmatism**

Etymologically philosophy comes from the words "Philos" which means love (love) and "shopia" means wisdom (wisdom, wisdom). Thus, philosophy is interpreted as a deep love for abomination. Philosophy can also mean deep thinking, meaning radical (from the word radix meaning root) about something (Tafsir, 1990). Etymological pragmatism comes from the Greek word; pragma means action or deed (Tafsir, 1990). In view of the metaphysical aspect pragmatism refers to the process in the experience of one's subjectivity.

Epistemologically pragmatism states that truth is relative and is determined by the scientific method of the usefulness of something, there is no absolute truth. Pragmatism in axiology. Using ethical and moral tools is determined by usefulness, ethics is relative and situational. Aesthetics is determined by experimental consequences, what the public likes is beauty (Bohrn et al., 2013; Quercia et al., 2014; Vartanian et al., 2013). John Dewey's pragmatism emphasizes that humans are free, dynamic and creative creatures. Pragmatism does not use the term universe, but the world. The term world here is considered as synonymous with cosmos and reality. John Dewey defines experience as the dynamics of life, namely; struggle, action, and deed (Asen, 2017; Maivorsdotter & Andersson, 2020; Scarinzi, 2015).

Therefore, pragmatism views that the essence of experience is struggle. Pragmatism views life as a continuous struggle, each concept or theory must be determined by its practical consequences. This situation encourages humans to develop various furniture in their lives such as intelligence, creativity, dynamics, intellectuality, and soul (Cloninger, 2013; Gladden, 2019; Oliva, 2014). Knowledge and thinking is a unique human ability, can develop as a tool to conduct experiments on the natural surroundings. Experiments are intended to control and shape the natural environment in order to fulfill the needs of human life (Gabrys, 2014; Wu, 2013).

Human intelligence is something that is creative and in the form of experience that continues to be realized in practical action, with experiments then humans are directed to making decisions so that humans determine their future. Human intelligence creates its future by taking actions. In pragmatic theory an idea is true if it can apply and lead us to satisfactory results. Something is true if it brings the human person into balance and can effectively solve problems (Datta & Mullainathan, 2014; Kopnina, 2016). In pragmatism, according to John Dewey truth is justification (verification) meaning; a proposition is true after an investigation and the consequences are realized. For example we are lost in the forest and then there is a consideration that "the way out is the left." This proposition has a true meaning for us if we then walk to the left, then we really get out of the forest (Basa'ad, 2018).

### **Pragmatism of Educational Practice**

Education should emphasize function and experience through problem solving and the scientific method. The nature of learners as assessors and continues to be active in expressing or interacting with their environment, from an epistemological pragmatism point of view, students are those who have experience. They are individuals who experience and use the ability to think to solve problems. Students learn from the

environment, respond to the environment and live it from the actions they take on the environment (Tung, 2013). The purpose of the school is not to make students able to become someone who masters the learning material but to make the students themselves learn how to learn so that they are able to adapt to the changing world (Tung, 2013).

### **Progressive Philosophy**

Progressivism is formed from the inclusion of several streams such as: *Naturalism*, *experimentalism*, *instrumentalism* and pragmatism, from these schools the flow of progressivism was formed. In his view, progressivism is identical with the notion of the liberal road to culture, namely that liberals are flexible and not rigid (flexible), open, tolerant and want to know and investigate for the sake of developing experience. Progressivism related to naturalism has the view that the universe is a real reality. Progressivism is identical with experimentalism which means realizing and practicing experiments (scientific experiments) where to test the truth of a theory and experimental science is the main tool (Anwar, 2015). Progressivism is also related to the flow of *instrumentalism*, because this school assumes that the main power of humans to face and solve problems in human life is the potential of human intelligence itself. It is related to environmentalism because this school assumes that the environment is a field of struggle to face life's challenges, both the physical environment and the social environment. Humans are tested the extent to which they interact with the environment, face change and reality (Anwar, 2015). It is related to pragmatism because this school is considered the biggest implementer of progressivism and is a guide for implementing education to be more advanced than before.

### **Education According to John Dewey**

John Dewey in developing his knowledge and practice in the world of education cannot be separated from the great influence of the two schools of philosophy that became John Dewey's own way of life, namely the philosophy of pragmatism and progressivism. Talking about progressivism, it is inseparable from pragmatism, both of which are very influential in John Dewey's concept of education. Whenever we think about a new movement in education, we need to take a broader or social view. Otherwise, changes in school institutions and traditions will be seen as arbitrary inventions by certain teachers (Dewey, 1987). Progressivism education always emphasizes the development and growth of mental thinking in solving problems and students' self-confidence (Ge et al., 2015; Strand et al., 2014; Sun, 2019). Progress or progress brings about change and from that change produces updates. Progress can mean containing value that can encourage the achievement of goals. Progress can be said to be "progress" if that progress has been achieved or there are results. The value of a goal obtained will be a tool to achieve other goals (Delgarm et al., 2016; Kannan et al., 2013; Loudon et al., 2015).

### **Practical Principles of Progressive Education**

The progressives arrange the principles of education as follows:

- 1) Student-centered (*child-centered*)

In students there is a natural desire to learn with the environment, in them there is a need for an interest in the experience. Progressives make students the focal point of education. The curriculum and methods of progressivism are developed

based on the needs and developed based on the needs, interests, and initiatives of children (Tung, 2013).

2) Active student

Students are children who are actively learning. Students will learn if they are not frustrated by an authority that imposes wills and goals. Refuse learning that is remembering, memorizing and reading (Tung, 2013).

3) The social class of the larger class

John Dewey (1897) in his book *My Pedagogic Creed* say:

*"Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself, and thus education is a process of life and not preparation for facing life."*

Learning and education occur continuously in one's life, learning experiences in everyday life are inseparable from the partition of time, space and context. Learning is interrelated between one object of knowledge and other knowledge takes place continuously (Tung, 2013).

4) Focus on problem solving

This stage follows a pragmatic emphasis on experience and problem-solving epistemology. Knowledge is obtained from experience not instructions delivered by the teacher. The learning methods used by Progressivism are: *Learning by doing, problem solving, active teaching* (Tung, 2013).

5) Cooperative and democratic school social construction

Education is life itself and not preparation for life (Dewey, 1897). Cooperative and democratic learning methods are more in line with everyday life. School is an unnatural place of competition, progressives reject excessive emphasis on inefficient and unhealthy competence. Group assessment can represent the learning process compared to individualistic assessment (Tung, 2013).

## **Cornelius Van Til**

### **The Concept of Education according to Van Til**

Education is an implication in an implication in the interpretation of God. No narrow intellectualism is implied in this definition. Think what God thinks. Dedicating the universe to its Creator and being the representative of the King of all things; this is human duty (Louis & Van, 2016).

### **The Concepts That Influenced Van Til**

At Calvin Theological Seminary Van Til studied under Louis Berkhof, Samuel Volbeda and other figures who taught Van Til the Dutch Reformed tradition. In the field of systematic theology in a narrower sense, Van Til learned a lot from Herman Bavinck. At Princeton, Van Til was close friends with Geerhardus Vos, professor at the seminary. Vos brought biblical theology to Princeton, which sought to understand the Bible as redemptive history. Van Til's sermons are mostly taught in his class also contain a lot of biblical theology (Depold, 2014; Sanou, 2013; Skeie, 2017).

Van Til was influenced by a character named Abraham Kuyper who stated, "Christ is Lord over all areas of human life, every thought and every field must be subject to His power". Of these several figures who influenced Van Til's thinking so that he was able to make apologetics and build systematic theology with a biblical-theological basis. Van Til was also influenced by various philosophies and movements. His philosophy teacher was W. Henry Jellema. Jellema himself studied under the idealists Harvard and Jellema himself had motivated Van Til to study idealism. Van Til in his apologetic

writings freely uses the vocabulary of idealist philosophy. But Van Til always emphasized that he rejected the true content of idealism (rejected the Creator). Thus, it is clear that the philosophy and theology that most influenced Van Til were of a Christian nature (Manogu, 2019).

### **Creation**

According to Van Til, the concept of education that can describe the unique character of Christian education is creation. This does not mean that creation is the basic concept of the Christian education system. The idea of creation is more applicable as a measuring parameter. The concept of creation is directly related to the visible universe, directly related to us. The concept of creation is seen as a presupposition of the concept of the covenant, the concept of creation expresses the uniqueness of the Reformed view of education (Louis & Van, 2016). The concept of creation in relation to Christian principles is very important to maintain. The concept of creation as a presupposition of the covenant concept is something that is very important to maintain, because only then can the concept of creation provide the foundation for the uniqueness of the Christian education system (Louis & Van, 2016).

The concept of creation has a divine mandate for education, we can understand this in the concept of the covenant. In the concept of the educational covenant included in the concept of creation is a brief statement of the principle of education. When we see that God's direct commandments are based on the concept of the creation covenant, we see an increase in our belief in the existence and importance of educational programs. We must know clearly what is meant by creation, education and why certain views with particular view of creation (Louis & Van, 2016). Christian teaching is teaching based on the Bible. In the concept of the covenant there is Christian teaching. The covenant is in creation that creation is included in the concept of God, that without God life and all human experience are completely meaningless, to strengthen our position that in the concept of creation there is a divine mandate for education. We should spend a lot of time looking at the various philosophies of education to show that no other philosophy than the Christian-theistic philosophy of education has a divine mandate (Louis & Van, 2016).

### **Christian Education is Rooted in Creation**

Christian education according to Van Til is based on the idea of creation. The idea of creation is an inseparable part of the whole theistic philosophy of life, that philosophy is a philosophy worthy of being held by humans because all other philosophies reduce experience to meaningless (Louis & Van, 2016). For Van Til, Christian educators must have a concept of creation which means that; time and space do not exist equally for God and for man. The idea of creation implies that the mind of God is the only original and absolute while the human mind is derivative and limited. The absolute person who can and is eternally *itself-dependence* with absolute self-interpretive power. The finite person (human) must reflect on the absolute person (God) (Louis & Van, 2016).

*An Analysis of the Thoughts of Cornelius Van Til* that the starting point of Van Til's concept of creation: God is the Creator; the world is His creation. Van Til describes this concept of creation as two circles. The first large circle represents God and a smaller circle below it represents creation. He emphasized that Christianity has a "two-circle" worldview. This thinking is different from secular thinking which only has "one circle",



the unbiblical mind equates all reality. But for Christianity God is Creator and sovereign Lord; the world is not at all equal to Him.

### **Covenant Basis for Christian Education**

Covenant relations provide the basis for Christian education. Van Til addresses this with three questions that parents usually ask and these are questions about Christian education. The first question demands awareness of the fact that although children are born in sin and are therefore under condemnation, they are sanctified in Christ and thus entitled to be baptized (Louis & Van, 2016). Second; requires renewed acknowledgment from parents that the doctrine found in the Bible and taught in the church is the true and perfect doctrine of salvation and thirdly asking them to promise that they will teach their children faithfully and diligently the glorious truths of salvation. The first is the right that children of Christian parents have in baptism; both the right of parents to receive baptism from their children; the three obligations included in the privilege (Louis & Van, 2016). After the three reasons above, we will discuss; how does the covenant relationship include the duty to provide a genuine Christian education to the children of the covenant?

#### 1) Adopt and Respect Allah

First, children of Christian parents are adopted into God's family. Now the children of the covenant are adopted into families very much higher than the families of any person of rank or honor. Children of Christian parents are adopted into God's own covenant family. Even when they lived on this earth, they had the privilege of joining the redeemed, God's holy people. They have a place in the church of Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Jerusalem (Louis & Van, 2016). The children of the covenant are ordained to live and act in fellowship with the perfected, with the great host of God's angels, and Jesus Christ the glorious King. Because of this understanding, it is appropriate for a Christian who believes in God, the Lord Jesus Christ, to receive a Kingdom education with high dignity (Louis & Van, 2016).

#### 2) Covenant Promises

The need for Christian education corresponds to the fact that Christian education corresponds to the fact that children of Christian parents inherit the covenant promises. The Lord who made a covenant with his servant forgave their rebellion, endowed them with material wealth and made them heirs together with his children that is what Allah actually does in the covenant of grace (Louis & Van, 2016). It is an important task for Christian parents in educating Christian children to impress upon the children who accept the covenant promise that they are utterly worthless and only out of generosity. The lord they are about to rob, and make them fully aware of the wealth which is given to them with great generosity and of course with responsibility for it. Children of Christian parents, though worthless, inherit the promise of covenant blessings. These promises cover all areas of life, natural and spiritual, temporal and eternal and also guarantee them with the riches of grace and glory that is in Christ Jesus, they must be made aware of the fact that it is the best they can bring to God (Louis & Van, 2016).

*"What shall I give to the Lord For all His blessings upon me? How should my restored soul give You due thanks, O my Lord?"*

So Christian education must help them find the right answer, from that point of view, it appears that the rich covenant promises, of course, require Christian

education. Again, the covenant promises necessitate Christian education because they are inevitable. Those promises place a great responsibility on our children (Louis & Van, 2016).

### 3) Covenant Terms

The importance of Christian education is in line with the conditions of the covenant. God wants the children of the covenant to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to get salvation and turn from sin to holiness, which is to follow the great road of sanctification along the way of their lives. First, faith is the receiving organ through which they hold on to Christ and all the blessings of salvation. Faith is not an empty intellectual assent to Christ's claims or simply a surge of emotion resulting from demands that flare up under intense psychological stress.

Second, faith is the only condition for entering into covenant life. Faith must be accompanied by a sanctified life, that is, through formation by the Spirit of God. This is a very comprehensive claim, a trait which must be well understood. That's why Christian education is needed (Louis & Van, 2016). Christian education is one way that God wants to use faith to work in the child's heart. Christian education teaches children to forsake sin and strive for a holiness without which no one can see God. Christian education took the child's hand and led him step by step on the path of purification to the city of the eternal King (Louis & Van, 2016).

### 4) Weaknesses of Van Til's Education Concept

The weakness of Van Til's education is that this education highly upholds discipline, usually lacks flexibility in strict and rigid rules, strict formal methods, instructional learning and teacher-oriented so that it seems "authoritarian" and "forces" students to become individuals who are fully obedient to the existing rules.

### 5) The Advantages of Van Til's Education Concept

The teacher is the main actor who holds the authority in the learning process. Teachers play a major role in teaching lessons, obedience, character development, knowledge, and absolute truth based on God's word.

Another advantage is that students are educated in spiritual values so that students not only learn to fill in their knowledge but also their spirituality as God's creatures. Children are educated to depend on God, subject all thoughts to God's love and the need for submission in obedience to God, in this education, according to Van Til, students are taught by instructional methods, reading, memorizing, and repeatedly teaching absolute truth values. So that the child's understanding of an absolute truth becomes strong and the child understands, when doing everything the child has the right benchmark that he must consider in making all his life decisions.

## Character Curriculum

The term curriculum comes from the Greek, namely *curure* which means running, exploring, creeping, going around and the like in the race arena. The word *curure* then developed into a curriculum which more or less means a learning competition arena in order to achieve certain results (Toelie, 2017). Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and formulates the curriculum as "a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve national education goals (Educational Science Development Team, 2007).

The curriculum is never separated from the plan and process. As a curriculum plan, it is a design of educational content or content that must be mastered or owned by students. Meanwhile, the curriculum as a process is the whole or totality of the learning experience of students at a unit or level of education to master educational content in accordance with the design that has been compiled. The totality of the learning experience of students is the result of learning that can be seen in the behavior of students as a whole in applying what has been obtained in social life (Ali & Aisyah, 2018).

Development of a character-based education curriculum, namely a curriculum that involves aspects of knowledge (cognitive), feelings (feeling), and action. Based curriculum is a curriculum design that prepares citizens to appreciate the cultural values that develop in society (Majir, 2017). Talking about the character curriculum, it cannot be separated from character education. Character education is referred to by several terms, including: value education, civic education, and moral education. These terms refer to everything that is good that can be developed in humans so as to form a character. Character education is a process carried out to develop students' mindsets in adopting character values. Character values as a result of character education are expected to lead to the formation of a complete human being (Mumpuni, 2018).

### **Curriculum According to John Dewey**

John Dewey has a concept of thinking about the curriculum that is different from other educational figures. According to John Dewey, the curriculum is the same as the methodology and the methodology also includes the curriculum. In short, the subject being studied and the processes involved in it are integrated, in John Dewey's curriculum, he does not agree with the teacher-centric style in the sense that the teacher conveys ready-made or ready-made information that needs to be "absorbed" by the child. As far as possible, a student has the right to find knowledge, relationships, processes, principles, for example, which have entered the treasury of human knowledge, but this time the results of his achievements are very personal and are no longer just a dead inheritance.

A five-year-old child discovering an object that can be purchased with the addition of five cents and another five cents is truly an inventor, although the knowledge is no secret with experience there is a true addition to the child's experience and not one that is simply added mechanically only; the child is truly enriched by new experiences. The spontaneous acting style seen in young children's activities appeals to sympathetic observers precisely because of their perception of this clever originality, whereas the joy that children experience is the joy that comes from being able to do something intelligent and even creative in that activity no adult has ever experienced. Tell the child to do it. The child himself initiated it. In connection with the nature of the natural question for educators are: "How do I build something on that natural interest?" Dewey answered with the "problem-solving" method, because the method grew naturally from the way people think and solve problems (Vaughan, 2018).

The process of solving problems may also be called scientific thinking because the process is used by scientists to solve problems. Scientists formulate problems and use knowledge to formulate hypotheses, then he conducts experiments to test these hypotheses then he draws conclusions, reports them and receives feedback from colleagues, maybe their questions cause new problems and the process of solving the problem is repeated again. This approach does take a lot of time, but Dewey believes

that with this approach, students gain true knowledge, understanding and skills, not something that is obtained from the initiative of the teacher (Forzani, 2014; Friesen & Scott, 2013; Retna, 2016; Wood et al., 2018).

Schools are laboratories for young people to learn to live in society, so the curriculum needs to grow naturally from the needs of children to live in society as seen in the school space itself. In practice, the curriculum at Dewey's school recorded many of the same subjects as those studied in ordinary schools. The difference is that in Dewey schools, teachers do not schedule a special time that is used every day to teach certain. The teaching and learning experience itself determines the time and sequence. The result of such an educational experience is that students are guided to solve problems intelligently so that it has an impact on their social life. Nothing is more important to members of society than that (Alimisis, 2013; Forzani, 2014; Malik, 2018; Nelsen, 2015)

For John Dewey, the curriculum must be centered on students, children's interests become a reference in determining the topic of discussion in learning. Children need to learn from life so that children gain skills as provisions for life. Learning in the classroom involves physical activities, the use of objects as tools can be manipulated concretely by children so that they can develop intellectual abilities (Yus, 2015). According to progressives, students basically want to know and are creative. They need opportunities to express themselves and they are thirsty to learn. The curriculum departs from the interests of students. The curriculum must be concerned with social issues, the school environment and society are basically one, not separate, where interaction, communication, and cooperation occur (Munandar, 2018).

In determining the curriculum, each lesson must be a unit. Experiences outside of school and at school must be combined so that they become a unity or unity. The way is by taking a problem as the center of activity, the problem must be of interest to the child, which attracts the child's attention. In the progressive curriculum, they reject several things, which include: authoritarian teachers, learning by methods that rely on instructions in textbooks, learning by memorizing information with factual data, the use of classes in social reality, using discipline and corporal punishment in learning. In the learning process, the teacher's task is only as a guide who encourages children to work together, investigate and observe for themselves, think and draw their own conclusions, build and decorate themselves according to the child's own interests (Tung, 2013).

### **Curriculum According to Van Til**

Instead of educational policies based on the certainty that humans must live for God. Here, too, we must be bolder in letting concepts from the Christian world-and-theistic worldview determine what is at the center of the curriculum. The curriculum deals with the "facts" of space and the "facts" of time. Any subject taught is always related to space-time "facts" (Louis & Van, 2016). Teaching must be with reference to Allah. The fact that space-time was created by God, so its relationship with God is the most important thing that must be known. It is not enough to simply say that the most important thing to know about a "fact" is its relationship with God. The relationship with God is the whole meaning of this fact. As a Christian, we believe in God, and our belief is that there are no facts outside of theistic facts, in contrast to the thoughts of godless people, they think that facts are facts. It has nothing to do with God (Louis & Van, 2016). Therefore, the curriculum must be made with reference to Allah. The difference between the Christian education curriculums from the general curriculum is how we make God the "reference" of our teaching (Louis & Van, 2016).

Christian curriculum should be based on God's Creation (a series of plans based on God's Word that is able to cultivate and maintain faith). Departing from that, the Christian curriculum is a series of God-oriented plans, processes, evaluations and feedback. Van Til devised a God-centered curriculum. He arranged this based on God's leadership, this has the understanding that God who created the universe and the universe was created for man because thus the curriculum is centered on God. The curriculum used must see man as a creation that is in the image and likeness of God, then the curriculum can be centered on God as the Creator (Til, 1979).

Natural precedes the Spiritual speaking of the curriculum, the point emphasized here is that every fact of space-time must be placed before the absolute person of God. Humans are at the center of the curriculum development program. God has placed the environment under man, not man under the environment. We must add that human beings as Christians must be at the center of the curriculum, in formulating the curriculum (Louis & Van, 2016). Van Til uses the relationship between God and man. For example; God's relationship with Adam, Christ and Noah, Christ and Abraham, Christ and Moses, Christ and Paul and so on. Humans must understand God's work which begins with God's creation of man, then falls into sin, even though God still loves man. God has created a work of redemption to save mankind so that the Christian education curriculum brings people to know Christ more and understand the will of Christ within them (Apinasari, 2018). Thus a history of salvation that focuses on the plan of salvation must be at the center of all history teaching.

Safety history should be central to the curriculum, does not mean inconsistently using many hours of study on subjects outside of salvation history. This means only that when nature is linked to history and when secular history is linked to salvation history that saved humanity is at the center of the curriculum. Only then can any and all facts in the space-time world be brought into contact with the absolute person of God. Only then can emphasis be placed on what should be determined (Louis & Van, 2016). Such a curriculum enables us to locate important figures in human history and in the history of human salvation without having to be afraid to spend more time on Moses than on Mussolini. Only then can nature be placed as God's moving picture book. Therefore, the Van Til curriculum emphasizes the importance of integrating general subjects with subjects that teach Christian values (Louis & Van, 2016).

Van Til argues that the Christian curriculum is able to face the conditions of the times without having to lose the Christian faith. The Christian education curriculum must dare to show the difference between the general/secular curriculum and the Christian education curriculum. Van Til said that the Christian curriculum that has been programmed must be carried out with full faith (*patience of faith*). The original education that had been set had to be carried out despite the many challenges faced by the Christian education curriculum. The Christian curriculum is a series of educational plans or programs that involve God and bring people to a full life in fellowship with God (Louis & Van, 2016).

### **Early childhood**

In-Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, it is stated that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students can actively develop their potential to have religious-spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and skills needed by himself, society, nation and state (Wiyani, 2016). Law Number 20 of 2003

concerning the National Education System Article 1 point 14 states that ECE is an effort aimed at fostering children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help growth and physical and mental development. Spiritually so that children have readiness to enter further education. ECE is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six, which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education (Asnawati & Pura, 2019).

### **Students According to John Dewey**

The child is the fulcrum, the starting, middle and ending line, growth and development are ideal. The child's personality is more valuable than the subjects. Learning is active, learning is a verb, we must stand beside the child and let the child walk on his own accord, what determines the quality and quantity of learning is not the field of study but the child himself. Children's interests become the center of education. Teachers must be able to understand the natural instincts of children. Freedom and initiative became "John Dewey's educational motto" (Freiere et al., 2001). According to progressives, students basically want to know and are creative. They need opportunities to express themselves and they are thirsty to learn (Munandar, 2018).

### **Students According to Van Til**

The child must be placed before a limited range of open possibilities. The term often used in this adjustment process is the phrase "personal integration" into the environment. The whole education is referred to as personality development. Students are subject to the curriculum, not the curriculum is subject to students. Children as individuals who are not limited can only develop properly if they are placed in front of an absolute person. Van Til said that the child as a person is a fact of space-time, where the fact of space-time can have significance if placed in the right relationship with God. Therefore, children must be educated to have the right relationship with God (Louis & Van, 2016).

### **Early Childhood Education Curriculum**

The ECE curriculum is a set of plans that are drawn up and developed and implemented to provide early childhood education services on formal and non-formal channels to optimize the growth and development of early childhood. So, the target to be addressed by the ECE curriculum is the achievement of optimal physical growth and religious and moral, cognitive, language, and social and emotional growth based on the standards of growth and development for Early Childhood that have been stipulated in Permendikbud Number 137 of 2014 concerning Standards for Child Education. Early age (Wiyani, 2016).

### **Authors' Point of view**

In this case the author agrees with the concept of education according to Van Til which emphasizes Bible-centered education as the basis of teaching where children must be taught to know their Creator and they are creatures so that as creatures we must live responsibly before God as our Creator (obedient to our Creator). Although the author tends to agree more with Van Til's concept of education, it does not mean that the whole concept of John Dewey's education is rejected by the author because according to

the author, John Dewey's educational concept has a good side, meaning that in John Dewey's educational concept, he provides a space of independence for students that allows students to become creative, and innovative so that students can develop all their talents and develop their knowledge. Thus, although the concept of education of the two figures has sharp differences, they can complement each other. John Dewey's educational concept has made a major contribution in the world of education to develop intellectual intelligence so that children become intelligent, innovative and creative children. Meanwhile, Van Til intervenes in faith, teaches moral values and character

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a comparative study between the educational concepts of John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til, the authors found a difference in principle regarding the educational concept of the two figures, John Dewey and Van Til. John Dewey's educational concept is an educational concept that considers the potential of human intelligence as the main force to face and solve life's problems so that the focus of education according to John Dewey is more inclined to the intellectual development of students. For John Dewey education does not need to involve supernatural things because such things will only be a hindrance to the progress of mankind so that it needs to be abandoned. So, it can be concluded that John Dewey's concept of education is *Godless education* or education without God. In John Dewey's educational concept, there is no intervention of faith. Man is separated from God. In contrast to John Dewey, Van Til rejects John Dewey's concept of education because for Van Til Education must introduce children to who their Creator is so that children can live responsibly before the Creator. Education must be able to build children to have faith, fear God with true morality, integrity and intellectuality. Man was created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26) (Louis & Van, 2016). Humans are God's creations who must glorify God, so education does not only talk about science, but also morality and the integrity of life in accordance with God's call and moral demands. So, the concept of Van Til education is a Theistic education based on the truth of God's Word that intervenes in Christian faith, teaches moral values and character to children. Thus, as a result of the comparison between the concept of education according to John Dewey and Cornelius Van Til, the author makes a curriculum with a Christian character for early childhood. John Dewey in curriculum development can help develop students' intellectual intelligence, innovative power and creativity, while Van Til's educational concept instills moral values and character and makes children personal with integrity and fear of God. Limitation from this research are a literature based research so, cannot be known directly implementation in schools. So, researchers can then use research in schools.

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