

# AN ANALYSIS ON LEARNING LOSS AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION

**Amelinda Devina Zandroto<sup>1</sup>, Siane Indriani<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>) Universitas Pelita Harapan, Tangerang, Banten

[amelindadevinazandroto@gmail.com](mailto:amelindadevinazandroto@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [siane.indriani@uph.edu](mailto:siane.indriani@uph.edu)<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Christian education views students as an image of God. During the pandemic of COVID-19, students encountered learning loss phenomena which has become a challenge for Christian schools. Thus, this study aims to elaborate the difference between Christian perspective and secular perspective toward the “learning loss’ phenomena; how important a holistic education is to be implemented in the classroom; and to explain the role of the teacher as a facilitator to implement holistic learning in the classroom. The research method used in this study is literature review. The result showed that students as the image of God should be valued as a whole person, not only partially as viewed from secular perspectives. Christian teachers need to be equipped to see and teach their students holistically, such as planning their lessons to be ‘contextual’ and relevant for their students in order to raise awareness for tolerance, empower their talents, and conduct learning processes through loving interaction and applying holistic assessments. A recommendation for further research is to implement holistic education at primary level and elaborate the challenges faced by the teacher.

**Keywords:** Learning loss; Holistic education framework; Principles of holistic education

### Abstrak

Pendidikan Kristen melihat siswa sebagai *Image of God*. Selama pandemi covid-19 siswa menghadapi satu fenomena, yaitu *Learning Loss*, di mana terdapat penurunan dalam proses pembelajaran siswa. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari paper ini adalah untuk menjelaskan perbedaan antara sudut pandang kekristenan dengan sudut pandang sekuler terkait fenomena "*learning loss*"; pentingnya penerapan pendidikan holistik di dalam kelas, dan menjelaskan peran guru sebagai fasilitator dalam mengimplementasikan pendidikan holistik di dalam kelas. Penelitian ini dilakukan menggunakan metode kajian literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa murid sebagai *Image of God* seharusnya dididik sebagai manusia yang utuh, dan tidak hanya sebagian seperti halnya dalam pandangan sekuler. Guru Kristen harus diperlengkapi agar dapat melihat dan mengajar secara holistik. Misalnya, merencanakan pembelajaran yang kontekstual dan relevan untuk siswa agar dapat membangkitkan kesadaran mereka akan toleransi dan mengembangkan talenta mereka. Serta mengimplementasikan pendidikan holistik di dalam kelas melalui interaksi yang didasarkan pada kasih serta penerapan penilaian holistik kepada siswa. Sebagai rekomendasi, peneliti menyarankan agar penelitian selanjutnya berfokus pada penerapan pendidikan holistik kepada murid di Sekolah Dasar serta memaparkan tantangan-tantangan yang dihadapi oleh Guru.

**Kata Kunci:** *Learning loss*; Kerangka pendidikan holistik; Prinsip pendidikan holistik

## **BACKGROUND**

In the last few years, during the pandemic, students have been facing a learning loss. Learning loss is a term to describe the decline in students' learning (Pier et al., 2021). Such a decline in student's learning was measured based on comparison of some standard test results that show a significant gap (Lorič, 2020). Research done by INOVASI collaborated with the Ministry of Education's Policy Research Centre (Puslitjak) (2021) shows that the students in grades 1 and 2 are experiencing 5 to 6 months of learning loss for 12 months conducting distance learning. From a Christian perspective, humans are unitary and complex beings, whose nature is not reducible to a single principle (Erickson, 2013). Geisler (2011) also explained further that a human is a person with intellect (mind), emotion (feeling), will (choice), and conscience (moral capacity), and all these aspects cannot be separated. Therefore, educators are supposed to see students as holistic humans. Having such a perspective affects the way educators teach the students particularly in responding to the learning loss phenomena.

The present study aims to investigate how Christian perspectives respond to the phenomena of learning loss and to describe the role of teachers as facilitators in the implementation of holistic education in the classroom.

## **STUDENT'S NATURE FROM A CHRISTIAN AND SECULAR PERSPECTIVES**

People are a unique and wonderful image of God. To understand human nature holistically, people need to understand the epistemology of Christianity, where the bible is its foundation. Genesis 1:26 that God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. This verse refers to human nature, which has complex unitary beings, including intellect (mind), emotion (feeling), will (choice), conscience (moral capacity). (Grudem, 1994; Erickson, 2013; Nichols, 2017; Geisler, 2011). This is the holistic truth about humans. In addition, Knight (2006) emphasized humans as an individual person who is unique and has their own personal worth. Miller (2017) stated that "God makes each person unique in many special ways. He has given us each a unique personality as well as hand-eye coordination, ability to play an instrument, artistic ability, intelligence, etc." The fact stated above shows that every human is unique, complex, wonderful, and rich in gifts and talents given by God. As

an implication, by knowing this truth, people should see others as what God sees them -as a worthy and wonderful creation.

However, not all people in this fallen world can view humans through this holistic lens. In fact, there are some worldviews which capture humans as immensely contrast with the Biblical worldview. For instance, Perennialism theory (cited in Knight, 2006) states that “human life in its fullest sense can be lived only after the rational part of a person is developed.” Besides, another extreme worldview is seeing humans as a machine, where the man will be valued for what they do (Erickson, 2013). On the other hand, postmodernism theory tries to explain that human values are placed in whatever value they ascribe to themselves (Anderson, 2017). From the theories above, the meaning and value of human nature always depend on human achievement.

As a real example, learning loss that happened lately is basically measured only by students' intellectual loss that occurred because of the lack of interaction occurring in distance learning. In California, the researchers found that the students were experiencing learning loss based on the students' formative assessment results (Pier et al., 2021). Besides, this phenomenon happened because the school must move face-to-face teaching due to the pandemic to the online learning process (Engzell, Frey, & Verhaagen, 2021). Furthermore, a real example of learning loss phenomenon which was sophisticatedly and regularly mentioned during covid-19 also happened in Indonesia (Waluyo, 2022, Arfah, 2021). Research done by INOVASI collaborated with the Ministry of Education's Policy Research Centre (Puslitjak) shows that the students in grade one to three are experiencing learning loss based on the students' numeracy and literacy test results. Moreover, another study displayed that the primary cause of learning loss phenomena in Indonesia was because the school conducted distance learning during the pandemic which meant there was a loss of interaction between the students and the teachers (Bima et al., 2020).

Christian Education sees the learning process not only as a means for intellectual development but, learning covers all the aspects of human life as a holistic person. Besides, its purposes should be based on Christ-centered education which means they will see that everything (including the pandemic that demands the teacher and students conduct the

distance learning) is still under God's control and He must have a purpose behind this critical condition. Thus, when it comes to the term of learning loss, it is not about intellectual loss, but this is more on a tough condition which the Christian teacher should encounter, this is even a chance to reflect that in the middle of learning loss phenomena that the world tries to display, the Christian teacher will stand firm to see the students as a holistic person.

## **HOLISTIC EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**

Holistic education pays attention to all dimensions of human life including intellect, emotion, creativity, and relationship (Schreiner, 2005). Miller (2006) confirmed that a holistic education views humans as a whole person that involves one's intellectual, body, mind, and spirit. In addition, humans should be encouraged to be at their fullest potential (Forbes cited in Iyer 2015). Simply stated, holistic learning involves and empowers the whole aspects of students including mind, heart, and body to produce something great potential from themselves to contribute something to their environment.

In addition, Miller (cited in Papagiannis, 2009) stated that holistic learning has some characteristics such as linear thinking and intuition, relationship between mind and body, relationship among subjects, and relationship between self and community. In other words, holistic learning instead of covering the whole students as a person, should also attempt to connect the students with the space where they live and to be aware of their role among all the existence on this earth. Besides, Majethiya & Patel (2015) stated that a holistic education involves students' life context, raises the awareness of all existence, brings up open-mindedness, and understanding potential and talent that everyone has. Overall, the characteristics of holistic education are contextual, bring awareness, build tolerance, and empower the talents.

Another important thing, a holistic education does not only put the standard of learning based on what the students achieve or perform, that might end up with the competitiveness between the students like in eastern schools commonly happens (Patel, 2003). Meanwhile, holistic education triggers the students to appreciate every diversity as a part of

their interconnected life. Thus, this holistic education work will shape the growth mindset for the students (Dweck, 2017). Moreover, by gaining the growth mindset, it will dispense the feeling of depression from students whenever they are encountering challenges. As a benefit, in the process of learning students will be able to feel confident, inspired, and creative (DeNeen, 2012). Therefore, learning becomes a joyful activity that students experience in their life, and it will never be forgotten, since it touches all aspects of their life.

Based on Christian perspective, the framework of Holistic education does not totally contraindicate with what Christian belief. Though, it should be noted that holistic learning in the secular view will end up to the flourishing which is human-centered education, meanwhile holistic learning in the Christian worldview should be Christ-centered, where Christ is the ultimate goal of learning itself (Wilhoit & Wilhoit, 1991) which means, it ends up glorifying Christ as the center of education. Moreover, through Christian Education, the students may see the primary aim of learning itself which is to lead them into saving a relationship with Christ and finally reach the ultimate goal which is service to God and other people (Knight, 2006).

### **TEACHER'S ROLE AS A FACILITATOR TO IMPLEMENT A HOLISTIC LEARNING PRINCIPLES IN CLASSROOM**

Holistic education needs support from holistic educators. The role of the teacher is significant in directing holistic education in the classroom. Thus, teachers should be aware of the way they teach students in the context of holistic education. Some characteristics are that teachers should recognize the difference of students' abilities and appreciate them, develop self-reflection, and support them to maximize their best potential (Schreiner, 2009). These kinds of characteristics only come from the heart full of love. More importantly, "Love is the basis of all authentic teaching and loving teachers help their students to aim high, while creating an accepting atmosphere and emphasizing positive personal relationships and basic values of kindness, consideration, cooperation and thoughtfulness." (Lakin, 2007). Without love, it is impossible for teachers to teach students holistically.

Furthermore, there are some principles of applying holistic education in the classroom, such as freedom of choice, honoring students as individuals, and educating for global citizenship (Flake, 1993). Meanwhile, according to Sutcliffe (cited in Schreiner et al., 2005) there are six principles of holistic learning in Christian perspective, such as the integrity of word and action in cooperative dialogue and in the creation of a just society, universality and inclusiveness, openness to the question, openness to personal growth, how in the one household people relate to each other the place of work and creation in a new ecumenical. Based on the principles above, the researchers simplified three important points in implementing holistic learning which can be done through loving interactions, designing relevant and authentic materials, using holistic assessment. The researcher ends up with these three points due to them representing the characteristic of Christian Education.

### **Implementing Holistic learning through loving interaction**

Implementing holistic learning in the classroom should be based on love. Love requires a rejection of isolation and striving for proximity (Swaner et al., 2020). In other words, teachers try to create classes where the freedom of choice is opened wider and the proximity between teacher and students is tight. Firstly, Holistic education provides a space where everyone is free to choose. However, the freewill here does not refer to the freedom to do anything. Furthermore, Krishnamurti (cited in Majethia & Patel, 2015) stated that “freedom is a state and quality of mind.” In other words, freedom is something that can drive people to act comfortably and happily. In Christian perspective, freedom is a privilege that God has given to humans so that they choose to love God purely from their heart and not because the power of God controls them to do it (Piper, 2016). In the class, it is needed for the teacher to give the space for students where they are free to speak up their thoughts, free to learn based on their talents and ability, free to explore the lesson that they love to learn, rather than control and direct them with the statics material that are somehow related with political or economic purposes.

Secondly, is honoring the students as a unique creation. Each student has different talents and needs (Majethia & Patel, 2015). In the classroom, it is significant for teachers to embrace and help the uniqueness that God has planted in each student to be flourished. The

teacher should honor them as wonderful individuals who have their own purpose and need to be treated as good as the teacher can do.

### **Designing relevant and authentic materials**

The nature of holistic education is also about interconnectedness; thus, global citizenship is also a must to be learned by students in the holistic class. The students must be exposed to all the differences and appreciate it as a handiwork of a wise and wonderful Creator who created it. As an implication, it is important for teachers to offer authentic material for the students. According to Herrington and Oliver (cited in Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014) authentic learning is directly related to the students' real life and prepares them to face and deal with real world situations. It means, teachers prepare the material for the students based on the context, culture, and everything that is related to the things that they encounter in daily life.

### **Using holistic assessment**

Besides that, another important thing to be considered when the teacher implements holistic education in the classroom is holistic assessment. Basically, the meaning of holistic assessment is “integrated or comprehensive assessment that requires demonstration of how students integrate “learning across domains (i.e., learning outcome/2015), “to move learning in a more holistic direction, alternative approaches are now being utilized such as project- and problem-based learning and to align with these approaches, alternative assessment methods are being used to gauge learning, such as portfolios, self-assessment (SA), and peer assessment (PA), with a greater focus placed on formative means than summative to assess learning outcomes. Holistic assessment might be difficult to implement due to it being complex at all. Thus, the teacher needs a coherent set of criteria for a student's work that includes a description of levels of performance quality on the criteria or usually called as rubric (Brookhart, 2013). Rubric will help the teacher to focus on the aspects that the teacher would assess from the student's project or performances.

## DISCUSSIONS

Education is sacred and significant, especially in Christian perspective. It is sacred because of its purpose to encourage people to live the Christian faith, to continue the clarity of God's vision, and to change the old paradigm about life to the new life based on Christ. Besides, Christian Education is significant, because it provides a channel where students can understand the essence of their life (Tye, 2000). Simply, in Christian perspective, education is a journey of faith, where people are encouraged to seek God as the ultimate truth.

However, the current case which is learning loss has reduced the essence of learning from holistic aspect to intellectual side only. In the previous sub focus, the authors have compared the case of learning loss that occurred in two different countries. These are two important things that the authors highlight from the research. Firstly, learning loss occurs due to the loss of interaction that happens between students and teachers since they must conduct distance learning. Learning loss in California and Indonesia are only measured based on the intellectual aspect. It could be seen from the data that the researchers display, numeracy, literacy, and formative assessment are the basic data that the researcher uses to finally decide that students are experiencing learning loss.

From the author's perspective, humans are the image of God. Men as the image of God means that man is like God and is part of his being in the image and likeness of God (Grudem, 1994). Besides, humans as images of God are also complex unitary beings whose nature as a human consists of body and soul, where the body is phenomena and soul is something invisible yet complex inside their body. (Erickson, 2013; Nichols, 2017). Thus, this concept also occurs in education as a part of the Christian life. The learning loss phenomenon from the secular perspective is talking about intellectual loss and it is not the same as how Christian view the learning process. Especially during the pandemic, the learning process should be relevant with students' needs, interests, and daily lives. Moreover, the learning process also needs to bridge up the interactions between teachers and students. The distance learning due the pandemic covid-19 in Christian perspective is a lesson in which the teacher and the students can both reflect on who they were before Christ and what is the

ultimate purpose of being at school according to God's sight and even though now, they have to learn with distance. Besides, this "phenomena" is also an opportunity for Christian teachers to be able to sharpen their calling through the tough situation, by faith they believe that they will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to treat students as a holistic person. Therefore, humans are called as the Image of God, they are not restricted by the condition, but they are lived by the power of the Holy Spirit to show Christ and His work in every situation.

Based on the explanation above, since students are holistic learners, they deserve to get the holistic education where the students are seen as a whole person. The characteristics and principles of implementing holistic education in the classroom are contextual teaching and learning, bringing awareness, building tolerance, empowering the talents. Simply stated, learning in the class should develop and empower all aspects of students as a proof of awareness of their complexity as a human. Learning in the class should develop and empower all aspects of students as proof of awareness of their complexity as a human.

Technically there is no difference between characteristics of Holistic education for non-Christian and Christian education. However, deep inside, it is seen through the aims and worldview, there is a big contrast between them. The difference is in their worldview. Christian education teaches students based on the Biblical worldview where every knowledge should be based on Christ (Lee, 2021). Thus, whenever the learning is contextual, brings awareness, builds tolerance, and empowers talents, its goal must be to focus on God's glory not for students' glory.

Furthermore, the teacher needs to understand and live in the understanding about the characteristics of holistic education before implementing holistic education in the classroom, which is holistic learning through loving interactions, providing the relevant and authentic materials, and using the holistic assessment. Firstly, teachers should build an environment where every member in the classroom feels free and safe to learn and interact. This is based on the essence of holistic learning, in which all students are unique, and every teacher should appreciate their uniqueness as humans. Besides, it is also significant for the teacher to create relevant materials for the students since learning is not only for

the sake of fulfilling their cognitive aspect, but also to prepare them to live purposefully, creatively, and morally in a complex world. Lastly, holistic education also needs to involve the holistic assessment and the learning method. Holistic assessment consists of three important points, first is portfolio, which must be focused on the learning outcomes of the curriculum. It can include the evidence of achievement of all the learning outcomes within its structure. Written reports of research projects. Second is self-assessment: which consists of activities such as assessing their own learning, evaluating their own work, monitoring their own progress, regulating their own learning, activities, and tasks, seeking peer and instructor feedback. Third is assessment which consists of activities such as highlighting the positive aspects of peer learning, noting areas for improvement in their peers' work, and giving constructive comments on how their peers may improve their work (Yusop, 2018). This assessment should be conducted in holistic education since the teacher teaches them holistically. Consequently, teachers also need to assess the students holistically.

Most importantly, teachers or educators need to be ready to encourage the students to live in the world based on what God plans in life. Thus, before teaching students, teachers need to make sure that they are a person who also understands and honors themselves as an image of God who is also unique and holistic. Besides, they also put Christ as the base and the goal of each learning process that they implement in the class. Bringing Christ and Christian values in the classroom are also part of holistic education, since only by knowing Christ teachers can teach the students holistically and students can learn holistically.

## **Conclusions**

From the discussions above, there are two points of conclusion raised by the researchers. Firstly, the Christian worldview describes the student as an image of God. It means that students are priceless and wonderful creations created in God's image. Besides, a student is also seen as a whole person and complex unitary being. Their whole life is body, mind, heart, will, and even moral capacity which also imply the way they are learning. Thus, Christian education runs the learning process holistically, covering all the aspects of students themselves. More

importantly, teaching students holistically is proof that the teacher honors them as a complex and wonderful creation by God Himself.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher as a facilitator to implement the principles of a Holistic education is to build interaction with students that is based on love, provide the relevant and authentic materials for the students, and prepare the holistic assessment in the learning process. Lastly, the role of the teacher as a facilitator is significant since the teacher is God's instrument or tool to enable the students experiencing God's presence through the learning process. Besides, they also partake in redemptive action by using the means of holistic education. Thus, the teacher should own the willingness and readiness to teach with love by using all the available resources or methods that match with the students' needs.

## REFERENCES

- Bima, L., Alifia, U., Pramana, R. P., Barasa, A. R., Tresnarti, F. A., & Revina, S. (2020). *Belajar dari Rumah: Potret Ketimpangan Pembelajaran Pada Masa pandemi COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://rise.smeru.or.id/id/publikasi/belajar-dari-rumah-potret-ketimpangan-pembelajaran-pada-masa-pandemi-covid-19>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2013). *How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading*. Alexandria, Virginia, USA: ASCD.
- DeNeen, J. (2012). *Holistic Teaching: 20 Reasons Why Educators Should Consider a Student's Emotional Well-Being | InformedED*. Open Colleges. <https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/other/holistic-teaching-20-reasons-why-educators-should-consider-a-students-emotional-well-being/>
- Dweck, C. (2017). *Mindset - Updated Edition: Changing The Way You Think To Fulfil Your Potential*. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

- Engzell, P., Frey, A., & Verhaagen, M. D. (2021). Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PNAS*, *118*(7). Retrieved from <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2022376118#bibliography>
- Erickson, M. J. (2013). *Christian Theology*. Michigan, USA: Baker Publishing Group.
- Flake, C. L. (1993). ERIC. *Holistic Education: Principles, Perspectives and Practices. A Book of Readings Based on "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective."*. Brandon, Vermont, USA: Holistic Education Press.
- Geisler, N. L. (2011). *Systematic Theology: In One Volume*. Michigan, USA: Baker Publishing Group.
- Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Henson, G. (2021). *Principles of CBTE: Holistic Assessment*. Kairos University. Retrieved from <https://kairos.edu/2021/02/15/principles-of-cbte-holistic-assessment/>
- Iyer, R. B. (2015). Academic Journals. *Blending East and West for Holistic Education*, *10*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5897/err2014.2015>
- Knight, G. R. (2006). *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*. Michigan, USA: Andrews University Press.
- Lakin, R. (2007). *Teaching as an Act of Love: Thoughts and Recollections of a Former Teacher, Principal and Kid*. Lincoln, UK: iUniverse.
- Lee, M. H. (2021). *Christian Schools and Character Education | ACSI Blog*. ACSI Blog. Retrieved from <https://blog.acsi.org/character-education>

- Lorië, W. (2020). *Contextualizing Covid-19 "learning loss" and "Learning recovery"*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncea.org/blog/school-disruption/contextualizing-covid-19-learning-loss-and-learning-recovery>
- Majethiya, H. V., & Patel, J. M. (2015). What holistic education claims about present scenario in education? *Recent Thoughts*, 6(1), 135-145
- Miller, J. (2006). *Review essay: Ancient roots of holistic education*. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 19, 55-59, Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1807/32399>
- Miller, S. (2017). *WDAHQ*. Worldwide Discipleship Association. Retrieved from <https://www.disciplebuilding.org/author/wdahq/>
- Papagiannis, G. (2009). *Education for Sustainability* (R. V. Farrell, Ed.). Paris, France: EOLSS Publishers.
- Patel, N. V. (2003). *A holistic approach to learning and teaching interaction: factors in the development of critical learners*. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 17, 272-284. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513540310487604>
- Pier, L., Hough, H. J., Christian, M., & Bookman, N. (2021). *Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)*. Retrieved from <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/policy-analysis-california-education-pace>
- Piper, J. (2016). *A Beginner's Guide to 'Free Will'*. *Desiring God*. Retrieved from <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-beginners-guide-to-free-will>
- Schreiner, P., Banev, E., & Oxley, S. (Eds.). (2005). *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context*. Waxmann, Münster.

- Swaner, L., Beerens, D., & Ellefsen, E. (2020). *MindShift Principles for Christian Education* | ACSI. ACSI Blog Retrieved from <https://blog.acsi.org/seven-mindshift-principles-for-christian-education>
- Wilhoit, J. C. (1991). *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning (2nd ed.)*. Michigan, USA: Baker Publishing Group.
- Williams, S., & Hin, L. C. (2015). Holistic Assessment: Creating Assessment with Students. *Taylor's 7th Teaching and Learning Conference 2014 Proceedings*, 389-397. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-399-6\\_36](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-399-6_36)
- Tye, K. (2000). *Basics of Christian Education*. Saint Louis: Chalice Press.
- Yusop, F. D. (2018). *Redesigning Assessment for Holistic Learning: A quick guide for higher education*. Kuala Lumpur: Academic Enhancement and Leadership Development Centre (ADeC), University of Malaya and Ministry of Education.