ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

CHAPTER XVI

Catholic Social Teaching: The Foundation For Education Policy And Practice

Hendrikus Febrianto Fernandez (hendrikusfdz@stprenya-lrt.sch.id)
STP Reinha Larantuka

Abstract

Education commodification has changed the education paradigm into an economic commodity in the industrial market. The most significant impact is the destruction of the fundamental values of education and the dignity of the human person. This study explores the contribution of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as a foundation for education policy and practice. The method used in this study is a literature study. The study was conducted comprehensively using literature from Church documents, philosophical sources, and research journals published in the last 15 years. The study is analytical-inductive, i.e., looking for fundamental principles from experience, and synthetic-deductive, i.e., applying principles to observable phenomena. There are two findings; first, the three main principles of CST, namely human dignity, the common good, and preferential options for the marginalized, must be given full attention. Second, integrating CST into education involves the components of educational institutions, curriculum, and students. The integration emphasizes respecting the three main principles of CST. By focusing on the three main principles, education can become a means of development that serves the market and supports the formation of the human person in all aspects (multidimensional) and a just, equal, and sustainable society.

Keywords: commodification of education, Catholic Social Teaching, Education Integration.

Introduction

Education is one of the key components of human development. The higher the quality of education, the higher the quality of human development (Herdiansyah & Kurniati, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2022). Elizabeth M. King's speech

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

at the Education World Forum 2011 mentioned that education is the basis for development and growth. The important point she emphasized was the quality of education and learning outcomes that support sustainable development (King, 2011). In this context, education significantly improves individuals' quality of life and is a strong basis for social and economic development.

The development of India and China shows that education is the key to successful development. These two countries massively send students to pursue quality education abroad. According to the Open Doors 2024 Report on International Educational Exchange, India and China sent the most international students to the United States in 2023/2024 (IIE, 2024)The goal is for them to return to develop their countries.

This has been a common phenomenon in India since the 1960s. Since the 1990s, India has embarked on a reverse brain drain strategy to repatriate skilled professionals to developed countries. This has brought many benefits, such as knowledge transfer, network building for various knowledge, industrial revival, and economic development. (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2023; Saefuloh, 2017). This shows that education is important for people in all aspects of their lives, and educated professionals greatly influence the quality of such development. (Castellsagué & Carrasco, 2020).

However, it should be noted that there has been a paradigm shift due to geoeconomic influences. Studying quality education abroad (brain drain) is more of a demand than a supply. (Khadria, 2002). Khadria mentions that the brain drain phenomenon is driven by the need for employers to send their employees to study abroad and not by the desire for quality education abroad. This shows that the success of education in advancing national development depends on domestic economic conditions (Sahoo & Pattanaik, 2014).

Eventually, the perspective on education changed to be pragmatic and entirely dependent on industrial interests. This has led to high education budgets. Many developing countries have increased their education budgets by 43% (Alam & Forhad, 2021), followed by soaring enrollment rates. According to the 2018 World Development Report (WDR), there has been a surge in girls' enrollment. The ratio of girls to boys jumped from 0.84 to 0.96, and even more girls than boys.

Many significant changes in education have been achieved in the last two decades. However, some records still need serious attention. In developing countries, there are still disparities in education. For example, the enrollment

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

rate of 78% contrasts with the completion rate of only 63%. The low quality of education produced is also evident. The surge in education participation is not directly proportional to the increase in the quality of education. Much of the problem of educational disparity is attributed to factors such as poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability, and geography (Filmer, Deon P. Rogers et al., 2018). This means efforts to improve inclusive and equitable education have not yielded significant results.

To understand the education gap above, we must place our perspective in the framework of education and the industrial revolution. The increase in education costs is linked to the needs of the industrial world. This means that education is designed for the needs of national and global economic development alone. The substance of education is no longer important. As a result, education has turned into an economic commodity that is traded in the market.

Developed countries have preceded developing countries in this regard. Education in developed countries that emphasizes digitalization, cyberization, and artificial intelligence is prepared to overcome the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and is proven to increase profits while increasing national prosperity. If developing countries' education is designed like that of developed countries, developing countries will face increasingly fierce global competition and difficulties. This phenomenon will exacerbate the education gap that occurs in developing countries. The most significant impact is the destruction of the fundamental values of education and the dignity of the human person. Within this framework, Alam et al. (2020) Can education as a commodity become the backbone of a country's development?

The question above needs to be answered to ascertain whether Alam's concerns over commodification education are justified. To answer this question, an in-depth understanding of education and how the Industrial Revolution has changed the education paradigm into an international commodity.

This study is intended to address the phenomenon of educational disparity by applying a foundation of educational policy and practice based on Catholic Social Teaching. The main question to be answered is the role of Catholic Social Teaching in addressing educational disparity. The aim is to explore the contribution of Catholic Social Teaching as the foundation of

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

educational policy and practice in overcoming the impact of the commodification of education.

Literature Review

The development of international education is now turning into a commodity. The change occurs in order to improve national competitiveness and the global economy. Education is becoming a tradable product that can change educational institutions' academic values and autonomy (Naidoo, 2003). According to Ruth Flower, the commodification of education emphasizes a focus on profit over quality. There is a tendency to attract more consumers by lowering academic quality standards. This commodification phenomenon can cause problems in access to education. The rich have easy access to quality educational institutions. Meanwhile, people with low incomes are left with substandard options. In short, the commodification of education raises issues of quality, access, and the fundamental value of education (Flower, 2003).

Kauppinen discusses knowledge, which is seen as a unique commodity. According to him, knowledge is often not known for its benefits until someone accesses it. This often creates a paradox in determining the price of knowledge itself and is difficult to commodify. As goods that have public characteristics, knowledge tends to be disseminated freely.

The value of educational commodities lies not in the knowledge itself but in the management and production processes to improve the quality of educational products (knowledge) based on consumer (student) satisfaction. Thus, education is subject to social transactions in this sense. Kauppinen explains that we do not know for sure whether the process of knowledge production in educational institutions works in the same way as the capitalist production process. This question is raised to show caution in describing education as an economic commodity because knowledge production is multifaceted. Nonetheless, he recognizes that knowledge commodities can threaten any knowledge community. (Kauppinen, 2014).

Johanna Köpsén's findings clearly show that market needs increasingly influence the direction of education policy. This means that employers have a dominant role in determining the direction of curriculum policy. Education is designed to produce graduates specific to employers' needs. In principle, the education provided focuses on benefiting employers.

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

This phenomenon has profound implications not only for education in general but also for individual students. Johanna noted that the impact reduces the student's personality to just a product with an exchange value (graduate commodity) produced by educational institutions within the market supply and demand framework. The further impact is that the role of education will be reduced to that of a service provider of graduate commodities. This phenomenon unconsciously damages the pedagogical relationship between educators and students (Köpsén, 2022).

Some of the findings above underline the massive movement of commoditization of education, which has resulted in changes in the quality of education to become increasingly pragmatic according to market needs, inequality of accessibility to educational institutions, low quality and integrity of educators, reduction of fundamental values of education, changes in individual students to become consumers of educational products and at the same time as production products specific to the needs of the industrial world.

Recent findings, such as commoditization in Iran, still confirm this conclusion. Commoditization prioritizes financial gain over the development of fundamental academic values. (Kazemi & Safari, 2020), commoditization of Zimbabwean higher education, which results in challenges to the inclusiveness of educational access (Tsverukayi & Poshai, 2024). The diverse impacts of the commoditization of education have implications for the weak principles of sustainable education. (Alam, 2023) and can lead to the collapse of educational institutions (Manian, 2024).

The disparities due to the commodification of education have changed the paradigm of education into an economic commodity in the industrial market. This is an issue that must be addressed seriously. For this reason, it is necessary to design alternative policies that support the fundamental values of education without compromising national development and the global economy. For example, addressing inequality in access to education requires a social justice framework.

Meng, (2024), implementing policies and practices of continuous learning and professional development (Ostinelli & Crescentini, 2024), setting education standards that are aligned with economic and social goals to ensure equal access, subsidizing tuition fees based on a needs-based system and linking to tax mechanisms on graduates, collaborating with industry to improve efficiency

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and sustainability in education, and implementing sustainable innovation that all stakeholders should support (Alam, 2023; Tsverukayi & Poshai, 2024).

The literature above reveals the existence of educational disparities in the era of commodification of education. Efforts have been made to implement sustainable education policies and practices. The findings of this literature review provide an overview of higher education that promotes the value of sustainability in the external aspects of education only. There is a space that has not been studied related to the substance of education and the development of students' personalities. Therefore, this study will expand on the findings by focusing on the fundamental values of education and holistic personality development.

Methode

The method used in this study is a literature study. The study collected and analyzed literature on Catholic Social Teaching as a foundation for educational policy and practice. It was conducted comprehensively using literature from Church documents, philosophical sources, and research journals published in the last 15 years.

The review is analytical-inductive, i.e., seeking basic principles from experience, and synthetic-deductive, i.e., applying principles to observable phenomena (Lombo & Russo, 2014). The literature analysis began by understanding key concepts such as the commodification of education due to the Industrial Revolution and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as the foundation of educational policy and practice. This conceptual analysis was made to limit the scope of the review discussion, identify knowledge gaps, and determine new knowledge. This was followed by a synthesis process to answer the research questions. As a final process, the synthesis results are discussed from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching and philosophy or philosophical anthropology.

Discussion

CST results from a systematic and comprehensive effort to address a wide range of issues by setting standards that apply universally to all people and providing guidance on how people or groups interact with others. As such, CST is relevant to educational issues affected by the commodification of education. The issue that needs to be discussed as the most important basis for assessing the impact of education commodification is the value of human dignity.

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The dignity of the human person is highlighted in various church documents such as Rerum Novarum (1891), Pacem in Terris (1963), Populorum Progressio (1967), Laborem Exercens (1981), Centesimus Annus (1991), Evangelium Vitae (1995), Laudato Si' (2015), Fratelli Tutti (2020), the Second Vatican Council Document, Gaudium et Spes and Dignitatis Humanae, the Compendium of Social Teaching of the Church (2004) and most recently the Dignitas Infinita Declaration on Human Dignity (2024).

These documents affirm that respect for the dignity of the human person is placed at the center of every legal system, regardless of the circumstances. Its value is immeasurable and has been called "infinite." Human dignity provides the basis for the recognition of human rights and the basis for the obligation of every individual to respect and protect them. Respecting and protecting human dignity is thus a fundamental condition for keeping human beings truly human.

This fundamental principle of CST has far-reaching implications. In summary, if we recognize the dignity of others, we must act in ways that assist and promote their well-being and rights. This is only possible within a community setting. This obligation includes acting with solidarity, justice, and compassion towards others, especially those who are poor and vulnerable, based on the principle of subsidiarity and striving to create an environment that respects the dignity of all creation. This means that human dignity is a fundamental principle that directs social and ethical interactions and encourages people to act for the common good.

In an industrialized society, the implications of this lengthy respect for human dignity are considered a theological speculation that has no significant impact on the increasingly pragmatic world of education. This is what drives the commodification of education. Thus, to inhibit this commodification, it is necessary to integrate CST into both educational policy and practice. Some study findings show that promoting Catholic Social Teaching principles in educational practice and policy has implications for human development.

Integration of CST with The Curriculum

Amid the commodification of secular, utilitarian education shaped by a government subject to the capitalization of education, the integration of CST principles into the curriculum is needed. Educational institutions should be encouraged to increase their autonomy in integrating the curriculum. This discourse is raised because the end of education aims to form a reasonable person in all aspects of his personality. CST principles can be integrated into

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various teaching materials such as Theology, Philosophy, Ethics, Social Sciences and Humanities that help the learner's growth as a whole.

Attention to the personal dignity of the learner is important as it relates to activating the holistic human consciousness. That consciousness cannot emerge without effort. Education with the integration of CST has been proven to push learners to complete and autonomous self-awareness. CST promotes the well-being of all people through the value of Bonum Commune. This principle enables individuals and communities to reach their full potential. The principle of preference for the poor and marginalized is a call to ensure that the marginalized, based on socio-economic status, receive adequate attention. Meanwhile, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity regulate care for others without undermining the dignity of the human person.

This is the point that must be reached. Human consciousness is the deepest place that holds the truth achieved when faith and reason are integrated. The literature confirms that the integration of CST can promote the formation of a whole person, a mature conscience, support for the common good above economic profit, strengthening community values, and resistance to increasingly pragmatic global pressures that tend to victimize the weak (Grace, 2013).

Integration of CST with Teaching Methods

The literature findings explain that CST can direct human life praxis towards the practice of virtue. This goal can be achieved by integrating CST into teaching methods. The pedagogical implications found in this study are the creation of egalitarian classroom dynamics, more collaborative learning experiences, and practical reasoning. Egalitarian dynamics create equal participation among learners, counter traditional classroom hierarchies, and support discussions about social justice and the common good.

Achieving these outcomes requires adequate practical experience by creatively and critically activating projects in various forms while reinforcing social responsibility and the common good. Graduates educated through such programs are better equipped to apply the principles of Catholic social teaching in their professional lives and contribute to a more just and equal society that ultimately promotes the common good (Whitmore, 2000).

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Preferential Option For The Poor VS Struggling Financially

The study of preferential options for the poor has been applied since the 19th century. Back then, religious orders and communities established schools to care for the poor and protect Catholic religious identity. By the 20th century, fee-paying schools were opened for the more fortunate, and the income was used to support schools for the poor.

Applying this principle encourages all quality education resources to be directed first to serve the needs of the poor without sacrificing those from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, this option is often problematic when faced with those in the middle class and educational institutions experiencing financial difficulties. Another problem with applying this principle is the emergence of new forms of poverty that are often invisible and even hidden. Often, educational institutions have to adapt their approach dialogically to meet their evolving needs. The problem is that this path is costly (McKinney, 2023).

Comprehensive Model of CST Integration in Professional Education.

A study examining professional education programs has produced a comprehensive model for CST integration. The model covers key education components, such as educational institution development, curriculum and learner engagement, and assessment and evaluation. It provided insights, strategies, and outcomes relevant to other educational programs. The model shows that CST offers an attractive resource to encourage students and future workers to carry out gospel tasks. This means that developing various components in education provides knowledge, instills a more substantial commitment to CST principles, and contributes to improving the world (Brenden, 2008).

An Integrated Framework for Catholic Teacher Formation

A review aimed at integrating the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic pedagogical criticism, and intersectionality theory has resulted in the Unified Framework. The findings of this literature suggest that the Integrated Framework can help learners move from instrumental teaching constructs to a Catholic vision. It encourages a shift from sectoral ego to multicultural relationships. Prospective teachers can be empowered to engage in diversity and learn to respect human dignity. This framework can be encouraged to

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translate CST principles into national teacher certification standards required by the state (Eick & Ryan, 2014).

A thematic analysis of the above literature highlights the following points. First, CST has three main principles: human dignity, the common good, and preferential options for the marginalized. Human dignity is related to the value of the human person, which is the basis of individual rights and obligations. The common good is a principle that maintains a balance between the rights of individuals and the wider society. This means that the dignity of the human person cannot be sacrificed in favor of the development of the wider society. The third principle of preferential option for the marginalized keeps humans from being oppressed by unjust systems and structures (Scanlan, 2008).

Second, CST must be integrated into education. This integration involves components of educational institutions, curriculum, and students. It has a strong epistemological basis because, in theology, the beginning of true knowledge is in unity with faith. In firm faith, humans receive the true truth. Therefore, education must guide humans to find the true truth that can be achieved in this integration (Dei Verbum, 5,6).

To substantially understand the integration of CST in education, it is necessary to adequately analyze the human person who is the ultimate goal of education. The concept of the human person is rooted in the history of Greek philosophy and Christian theology. Etymologically, the word person (*persona*) comes from the Greek word prosopon, which means mask. This term does not adequately describe the meaning of persona because it was originally used for theater performances that used masks. Greek philosophy did not use this word in its reflections on God. Only in the history of Catholic theology was the word used for the first time in the teaching about God. In later developments, the word persona was often interchanged with the words *hypostasis* and *ousia*, the meanings of which were often equated with substance (Kirchberger, 2007).

Philosophical reflection on the word persona is defined as an individual substance with a rational nature. Boethius defined it as persona est naturae rationalis individua substansia. Substance refers to the first category of Aristotle's division. The substance is the basis, independent of the unity of reality, and the final subject of all explanations or descriptions. Substance, in the full sense, is the individual. The term individual means the indivisible, one in itself. Each persona is individual, which refers to the first substance (suppositum) that cannot be broken down into many.

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This first substance can include people or things. Thus, it can include the rational and the irrational. About humans, persona as an individual substance (first substance) has rationality. Thus, every persona is an individual. However, one difference that determines persona as an individual substance is the aspect of rationality. The above definition is in line with what Thomas Aquinas said. He said that persona is every individual who has a rational nature (omne individuum rationalis naturae dicitur persona). This rational nature determines the persona as what exists perfectly in its entire nature (Hayong, 2011).

This notion of persona elaborated by the Patristic tradition explains the person of God. Augustine, for example, used it mainly in connection with the Trinity and the incarnation. He did not describe the term specifically and avoided using it (Latin: persona, Greek: prosopon). Nonetheless, he initiated this debate when he explained the doctrine of the Immanent Trinity and the Trinitarian Economy of Salvation (Dister, 2004).

The legacy of Augustine and all the church theologians (medieval thinkers) who were then involved in the debate about the teaching of the Trinity contributed greatly to the discovery, use, and meaning of the term person. The person of the Trinity became the prototype (initiator, actor, and driver of history). Likewise, the definition of human beings as persons with rational natures has complemented the broader and deeper understanding of the term. These theological and philosophical inspirations initiated the development of an understanding of the concept of the human person.

The keywords in the term person include multidimensional wholeness (spiritual, material, moral, social, individual, intellectual, emotional, natural, transcendental). The person is also an organic unity of all dimensions that influence each other, a multidimensional reality characterized by historical dynamics in self-expression and manifestation. The person lives and makes meaning of his life continuously in togetherness with others, the universe, and God. This development of understanding summarizes all discussions about the concept of the human person.

In the history of its development, as described above, the concept of person is widely used in discussing the doctrine of the Trinity. In several descriptions of the Trinity, it is noted that the concept of the person in the Trinity becomes the perfect model for humanity and the universe. Hampton Keathley explains the practical impact of the Trinity, apart from theological reasons, that the Trinity is the basis of all true fellowship in the world. He

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

mentions that all the wonders of creation, all forms of life, and all movements in nature reflect God's life. Nature reflects the many alignments of the nature and character of the living God (Hampton, 2004)

Based on this understanding, the concept of person used in the teachings of the Trinity underwent an imposing development. It became a strong, deep, and broad basis for understanding human beings comprehensively. Through this concept, which reflects the nature and character of the living God, we can understand the fundamental dimensions that need to be defended and fought for on behalf of human dignity. The multidimensional concept of the human person is undoubtedly open to dialogue with cultural understanding and the development of discoveries about humans.

The multidimensional concept of the human person has broad implementation in education. For example, human intellect is one of the dimensions of human beings developed in education. The essential characteristics of intellectual knowledge are immanent and immaterial. This feature ignores its material aspect because the material feature inhibits the intellect's ability to make abstractions. However, the immaterial feature cannot be separated from the material feature because the immaterial aspect can only be captured if there is a material aspect. This means that intellectual knowledge to understand the substance (abstraction ability) can only be passed by the existence of sensory knowledge based on empirical facts with material characteristics.

These two essential characteristics of material and immaterial are interconnected. The relationship exists to avoid reducing humans to material and immaterial aspects. If man is seen as merely material, he will be recognized and valued to the extent that he brings material benefits (materialism). Conversely, if humans are only seen as spirits while their bodies are seen as illusions, people will ignore the economic and technical aspects. In addition, immaterial nature has an unlimited reach. It differs from material nature, which is limited by its organic side. Thus, denial of immaterial nature will lead to a passive fatalistic attitude. Conversely, if material nature is absolutized, it will reject all norms. This is why all aspects of the human person must be balanced so that humans can achieve complete, broad, and deep personal development.

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Conclusion

The commodification of education brings significant challenges to its fundamental values, especially those related to social justice and the formation of the human person. Two research findings are presented. First, three main principles of CST, namely human dignity, the common good, and preferential options for the marginalized, must be given full attention. Second, integrating CST into education involves the components of educational institutions, curriculum, and students.

Integrating Catholic Social Teaching principles in education policy and practice is one approach that can address this challenge. It offers an alternative approach that can help overcome the challenges of the commodification of education. This approach emphasizes respect for human dignity, the principle of the common good, and special attention to the poor and marginalized. With this focus, education can become a means of development that serves the market and supports the formation of the human person in all aspects (multidimensional) and a just, equal, and sustainable society.

Through this study, it is hoped that further efforts will be made to explore and develop the application of CST in education so that these universal values can make a real contribution to addressing global challenges. Going forward, educational institutions need to encourage the involvement of all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and religious communities, to create a sustainable and dignified education system.

The missing piece of this study that warrants further research is how education deals with the rapidly changing dynamics of human history in the industrial era 5.0. Digital technology has changed many things. This has caused many realities to be poorly defined. For example, about new forms of invisible poverty. Likewise, the issue of educational institutions struggling to solve financial problems. This part needs to be explored to ensure that the integration of CST as the foundation of education policy and practice can produce good education graduates without disrupting the sustainability of national and global development. Critiquing this empty section requires further studies, specifically on poverty and how CST addresses this problem by implementing the principle of subsidiarity.

ISBN : 978-623-10-7056-2

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Author's Profile

Hendrikus Febrianto Fernandez, M. Fil. Born in Larantuka, East Flores, February 5, 1988. The author completed his undergraduate studies in Philosophy at STFK Ledalero in 2018 and his Masters in the Philosophy of Divinity program at Sanata Dharma University in 2023. He currently works as a lecturer at STP Reinha Larantuka and teaches courses on Anticorruption, Pancasila Education, Philosophy of Education, Citizenship, and Liturgical Music. The author is interested in studies in Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Education, and Catholic Education.

