

PHILOSOPHICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BUILDING TOLERANCE AWARENESS WITHIN THE MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MAKASSAR CITY

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Abstract

This article examines the philosophical reconstruction of Christian Religious Education (CRE) as an instrument for building tolerance awareness within the multicultural society of Makassar City. Utilizing a qualitative research method based on library research and a hermeneutical-philosophical approach, this article analyzes the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of CRE in the context of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in Makassar. Reconstruction is carried out on the paradigm, curriculum, methodology, and value orientation of CRE by integrating the thought of educational philosophers, multicultural theologians, and religious tolerance scholars. The findings indicate that philosophically reconstructed CRE can transcend doctrinal-exclusive approaches and transform into a dialogical pedagogy that situates the encounter with the "Other" as a formative moment of faith. The multicultural-tolerant CRE model formulated encompasses four dimensions: the theological-biblical dimension, the philosophical-hermeneutical dimension, the pedagogical-praxis dimension, and the socio-cultural dimension. These findings make a significant contribution to the development of contextual, inclusive, and relevant CRE for building a tolerant civil society in Makassar City.

Keywords: Philosophical Reconstruction, Christian Religious Education, Tolerance, Multiculturalism, Makassar City

INTRODUCTION

Makassar City, the capital of South Sulawesi Province, is one of the major metropolitan cities in eastern Indonesia, characterized by its extraordinary richness in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. As a historic port city, Makassar has long been a meeting point for various communities Bugis, Makassar, Torajan, Mandar, Javanese, Chinese, and Arab who coexist within complex social dynamics (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Makassar, 2023).

Yet this multicultural richness does not always proceed without friction. Various identity-based social tensions both ethnic and religious remain serious challenges that require systemic responses, one of which is through the channel of education (Mulia, 2021). It is within this context that Christian Religious Education (CRE) is called to play a transformative role that goes far beyond the mere transmission of doctrine to Christian students (Baidhaw, 2021).

CRE has long been perceived narrowly as confessional-exclusive education: teaching the truths of the Christian faith solely to the Christian community, with no meaningful relevance to cross-identity dialogue. This perception requires fundamental reconstruction. Robert W.

Pazmino (2022) affirms that the foundation of CRE should be integral, encompassing the theological, philosophical, and pedagogical dimensions that form whole persons in relationship with God, fellow human beings, and the world.

The philosophical reconstruction of CRE is not merely a methodological renewal, but an effort to reorganize the foundational paradigm concerning the nature, purpose, and orientation of Christian education itself. In this regard, Paulo Freire's (2021) thought on education as a praxis of liberation, Hans-Georg Gadamer's (2022) on the hermeneutics of horizons, and Jurgen Habermas's (2021) on communicative rationality constitute rich intellectual resources for building a new and more contextual framework for CRE.

This article aims to: (1) analyze the philosophical foundations of CRE in the multicultural context of Makassar City; (2) identify the paradigmatic weaknesses of existing CRE practice; (3) formulate a model for the philosophical reconstruction of CRE oriented toward building tolerance awareness; and (4) offer practical implications for the implementation of contextual and inclusive CRE in Makassar City (Banks, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophical Foundations of Christian Religious Education

CRE as an academic discipline has complex, multi-layered philosophical roots. Thomas H. Groome (2021), one of the most prominent educational theologians, views CRE as "shared Christian praxis" an approach that integrates critical reflection on lived experience with the living tradition of Christian faith.

Historically, the philosophy of Christian education has engaged with diverse streams of thought: from Augustine, who emphasized divine illumination as the foundation of knowledge, to Thomas Aquinas, who synthesized reason and faith, to John Dewey (2022), who proposed education as reconstructive experience. D. Campbell Wyckoff (2021) formulated the CRE curriculum as an expression of the dynamic life of the congregation, rather than the mere transmission of static doctrinal content.

Jack L. Seymour (2022) develops the concept of "teaching the way of Jesus," emphasizing that CRE is fundamentally an education in a way of life a pedagogy of character formation that follows Christ's example of love without discrimination. From this perspective, CRE cannot be separated from a commitment to social justice and the affirmation of every person's dignity as *imago Dei*.

Multiculturalism and Tolerance: A Philosophical Perspective

James A. Banks (2022) defines multicultural education as a comprehensive reform of schools and education that aims to totally transform the educational environment so that students from diverse races, ethnicities, and social classes can experience equality.

Iris Marion Young (2022), in her work *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, critiques the concept of integration that emphasizes cultural assimilation and instead offers a model of justice that celebrates difference as richness. In the context of CRE, Young's perspective encourages transformation from the "melting pot" model of education toward a "mosaic" or

"salad bowl" model, where particular identities are honored without losing the capacity for shared life together.

Emmanuel Levinas (2021), with his philosophy of the "face of the other" (le visage de l'autre), provides an exceptionally strong ethical foundation for tolerance education. Bagi Levinas, perjumpaan dengan wajah "yang lain" adalah momen etis fundamental yang mendahului segala teori. Pendidikan, dalam perspektif Levinas, adalah proses belajar bertanggung jawab kepada "yang lain" secara radikal dan tanpa syarat.

Martin Buber (2021), with his concept of the I-Thou relational mode, offers a dialogical perspective relevant to multicultural CRE. Buber distinguishes between the I-It relationship, which is instrumental in character, and the I-Thou relationship, which is personal, authentic, and honoring of the uniqueness of the other. Reconstructed CRE must cultivate an educational climate characterized by I-Thou rather than I-It.

The Multicultural Context of Makassar City

Makassar City has a long history as a cosmopolitan city. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Makassar, 2023), Makassar is home to more than 1.5 million people with a diverse ethnic composition: Bugis ($\pm 35\%$), Makassar ($\pm 25\%$), Torajan ($\pm 8\%$), Mandar ($\pm 5\%$), Javanese ($\pm 4\%$), Chinese ($\pm 3\%$), and various other ethnicities.

Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy (2021) observes that in the plural Indonesian context, religious education has a dual function: on one hand, it strengthens students' religious identity; on the other, it opens the horizon of cross-religious dialogue and cooperation. Makassar City serves as a living laboratory for both of these functions, where religious education is confronted directly with the concrete and complex reality of diversity.

Benyamin F. Intan (2022) emphasizes that good citizenship in the pluralistic context of Indonesia requires the capacity of each individual to uphold their particular faith commitment while respecting the rights and freedoms of others. This demands that CRE build students' capacity not only as Christians with a strong faith, but also as tolerant and democratic citizens.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach and hermeneutical-philosophical analysis. Primary data sources include works in the philosophy of education, CRE theology, multicultural studies, and religious tolerance scholarship published between 2021 and 2025. Secondary data sources include academic journals in theology and religious education in both Indonesian and English, national education policy documents, and demographic data for Makassar City.

Analisis dilakukan melalui empat tahap: (1) inventarisasi dan klasifikasi sumber pustaka relevan; (2) analisis kritis terhadap landasan filosofis PAK yang ada; (3) sintesis rekonstruktif yang mengintegrasikan berbagai perspektif filosofis, teologis, dan pedagogis; dan (4) formulasi model PAK rekonstruktif yang berorientasi toleransi. Richard Osmer (2022) memberikan kerangka metodologis teologi praktis yang menjadi panduan dalam proses analisis ini: deskriptif-empiris, interpretatif, normatif, dan pragmatik.

Research validity is maintained through source triangulation (inter-textual cross-checking), internal coherence of argumentation, and contextual alignment with the multicultural reality of Makassar City. Gadamer's (2022) hermeneutical approach of the "fusion of horizons" is applied to ensure that the proposed reconstruction does not lose its theological roots while remaining responsive to the existing socio-cultural context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Paradigmatic Diagnosis of CRE: Identifying Fundamental Weaknesses

Analysis of the dominant CRE practice in Makassar City identifies at least four paradigmatic weaknesses requiring reconstruction. First, the exclusive-confessional orientation: CRE is still frequently understood as education "for Christians only," with the singular aim of preserving and deepening the Christian faith, without equipping students with the capacity to engage in dialogue and relate positively with other religious communities (Mahardika, 2022).

Second, the transmission-dogmatic approach: CRE teaching methods are still dominated by one-directional transmission of doctrine, without providing adequate space for students to process, question, and integrate faith with their lived experience. John H. Westerhoff III (2022) warns that the transmission model alone produces passive "inheritors of faith" rather than active, critical "doers of faith."

Third, a curriculum that is content-centered rather than community-centered and context-centered. Maria Harris (2021) emphasizes that the true curriculum of the Church encompasses the whole life of the community of faith, not merely formal subject matter.

Fourth, the absence of a multicultural dimension in CRE curriculum design and methodology. Paidah Sihotang (2023) notes that the majority of CRE teaching materials in Indonesia remain minimal in incorporating the cross-cultural and cross-religious perspectives needed to build tolerance awareness.

Framework for the Philosophical Reconstruction of CRE

The philosophical reconstruction of CRE proposed in this article is built upon four mutually interacting and mutually reinforcing philosophical pillars.

Ontological Pillar: CRE as Education of Encounter

Ontologically, CRE is reconstructed not as education that merely forms a closed communal identity, but as education that prepares students for authentic encounter with the "Other." The theological foundation of this pillar is the doctrine of *imago Dei*: every human being, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or culture, is the image of God and therefore possesses inviolable dignity (Volf, 2022).

Miroslav Volf (2022), in *Exclusion and Embrace*, affirms that authentic Christian theology must produce the practice of "embrace" a genuine reception of difference rather than "exclusion" that builds walls of separation. Within the CRE framework, this means curriculum and methodology must actively create spaces of encounter where diversity is experienced as a gift, not a threat.

Epistemological Pillar: Dialogical Hermeneutics as Method

The epistemological reconstruction of CRE shifts the paradigm from "knowing about" to "knowing with." Gadamer (2022) teaches that understanding occurs through the fusion of horizons between the interpreter's horizon and the text, between the familiar and the foreign. In CRE, this means students study not only the biblical text and Christian doctrine in isolation, but in dialogue with the traditions and perspectives of other communities.

Habermas (2021) makes an important contribution through his concept of "communicative action," which requires ideal conditions of communication: every participant has an equal opportunity to speak, to question, and to challenge the validity claims of others. Epistemologically reconstructed CRE must create the classroom as a "public space" where dialogue occurs freely, equally, and rationally.

Axiological Pillar: Tolerance as Formative Value

Axiologically, the reconstruction of CRE positions tolerance not merely as one value among many to be taught, but as a formative orientation that permeates the whole of educational practice. Tolerance here is understood not simply as passively "tolerating" difference, but as an active appreciation of difference as richness (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

Nel Noddings (2021) dengan etika kepedulian (ethics of care) menawarkan fondasi nilai yang kuat: pendidikan yang baik adalah pendidikan yang mendorong peserta didik untuk peduli secara tulus dan konsisten terhadap kesejahteraan orang lain, termasuk "yang berbeda." In CRE, this ethics of care must become the lifeblood flowing through all aspects of the curriculum: from the selection of teaching materials and methods of learning, to the classroom culture being cultivated.

Pedagogical Pillar: Transformative Praxis

Freire (2021) teaches that authentic education is the process of "naming the world" critically a praxis that integrates action and reflection in the effort to transform reality. Pedagogically reconstructed CRE must move beyond "banking education," which merely transfers content to passive students, toward education that liberates and empowers.

Lev Vygotsky (2022) dengan konsep "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) dan Howard Gardner (2022) dengan teori kecerdasan majemuk provide a psychological-pedagogical foundation for CRE that responds to the diversity of students' learning styles. The reconstructed CRE model must be designed with consideration for the diversity of learning styles, intelligences, and cultural backgrounds of students.

The Reconstructive CRE Model: Four Integrative Dimensions

Based on the four philosophical pillars above, this article formulates a reconstructive CRE model consisting of four mutually related integrative dimensions.

Theological-Biblical Dimension: An Open Faith

The theological-biblical dimension of reconstructive CRE is grounded in biblical narratives that are inherently multicultural in character: the story of Abraham called to leave his ancestral monoculture; the mission of the prophet Jonah to the "foreign" Nineveh; the message of Ruth about loyalty that transcends ethnic boundaries; Jesus's Sermon on the Mount concerning love that extends to "enemies;" the Pentecost community characterized by multilingualism and multi-ethnicity; and the apocalyptic vision of praise "from every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Rev. 7:9) (Pauw, 2021).

Wolthart Pannenberg (2022) emphasizes that consistent Christian theology must have a universal character: the Christian faith cannot be confined within tribal exclusivism but must be open to all of humanity as the subject of God's love. Reconstructive CRE must integrate this universal theological insight into the whole of the educational process.

Philosophical-Hermeneutical Dimension: Critical and Open Reflection

The philosophical-hermeneutical dimension of reconstructive CRE emphasizes the importance of developing critical and reflective thinking capacity in students. Stephanus Djunatan (2022) proposes a theological reconstruction of CRE in the context of religious pluralism that centers on "critical openness" the capacity to maintain a strong faith commitment while remaining open to truth found within other religious traditions.

Charles Taylor (2022), in *A Secular Age*, reminds us that in a post-secular world, faith can no longer be held naively without reflection. Reconstructive CRE must prepare students to believe reflectively capable of maintaining faith commitments amid a plurality of competing truth claims.

Pedagogical-Praxis Dimension: Transformative Learning

The pedagogical-praxis dimension focuses on concrete changes in CRE's methods and learning strategies. Groome (2021) proposes a "shared praxis" approach encompassing five movements: (1) students name or express their own present life practice; (2) critical reflection on that practice; (3) the presentation of the "Story" of the Christian tradition and the "Vision" it offers; (4) critical interpretation of that tradition; and (5) pastoral and ethical decision-making.

In the multicultural context of Makassar, Groome's (2021) approach needs to be expanded to include the "storied others" the narratives and perspectives of other religious communities as part of the material for reflection. Jerome W. Berryman's (2022) "Godly Play" offers a narrative-based approach that enables children to build personal relationships with biblical stories while also developing the imaginative capacity to understand the perspectives of others.

Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl (2022) developed the revised Bloom's taxonomy, which emphasizes higher-order thinking skills: analysis, evaluation, and creation. Reconstructive CRE must be designed to develop these higher-order cognitive skills, so that students not only "know" about tolerance but are capable of "evaluating" and "creating" practices of tolerance in real life.

Socio-Cultural Dimension: Formation of Tolerant Citizens

Dimensi sosio-kultural PAK rekonstruktif menempatkan pendidikan dalam konteks yang lebih luas: pembangunan masyarakat sipil (civil society) yang toleran, demokratis, dan adil. Weinata Sairin (2022) menegaskan bahwa kerukunan beragama adalah pilar utama kerukunan berbangsa, yang harus dibangun secara sengaja dan berkelanjutan melalui berbagai jalur, termasuk pendidikan.

Rev. Dr. Oktapianus Parintak (2023), in the context of Indonesian contextual theology, develops a concept of multicultural CRE rooted in the theology of creation: God is the Creator of all diversity, and diversity itself is an expression of God's creativity and greatness. From this perspective, destroying diversity and building intolerance is fundamentally an act contrary to the will of God the Creator.

James Fowler (2021) dengan teori "tahapan iman" memberikan kerangka perkembangan yang berguna: toleransi yang autentik umumnya berkembang pada tahap iman yang lebih matang (tahap 4 dan 5) yang ditandai oleh kemampuan berdialog dengan perbedaan tanpa kehilangan identitas sendiri. Reconstructive CRE needs to be designed to facilitate this mature faith development, rather than merely reinforcing conformity at earlier stages of faith.

Implementation of Reconstructive CRE in Makassar City

The implementation of the reconstructive CRE model in Makassar City requires change at three levels: curriculum, methodology, and institutional culture. At the curricular level, the changes needed include: the integration of multicultural and tolerance perspectives into CRE competency standards; the development of teaching materials that represent the religious and ethnic diversity of Makassar; and the addition of space for the study of interfaith and intercultural dialogue (Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007, 2007).

At the methodological level, the changes needed include: the transition from monological lecture methods to dialogical-participatory methods; the use of digital technology to expand spaces of cross-identity encounter; the development of service-learning projects involving students from diverse backgrounds; and portfolio-based assessment that measures character and attitudinal growth, not merely content mastery.

Pada level budaya institusional, sekolah-sekolah Kristen di Makassar perlu secara aktif membangun budaya inklusif yang merayakan keberagaman, menyediakan ruang-ruang pertemuan lintas-agama dan lintas-etnis, serta membangun kemitraan dengan komunitas-komunitas agama lain untuk program-program bersama. Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional memberikan landasan hukum yang kuat bagi pengembangan pendidikan yang menghargai keberagaman dan membangun kesatuan dalam kebhinekaan (Law Number 20 of 2003, 2003).

Elkana Chrisna Mahardika (2022) notes that CRE based on multiculturalism in the postmodern era must be capable of providing students with a "cognitive map" for navigating the plurality of identities without losing a solid faith commitment. In Makassar City, where ethnic and religious diversity is a vivid reality, this "cognitive map" is not an academic luxury but an urgent life necessity.

CONCLUSION

The philosophical reconstruction of CRE in the multicultural context of Makassar City is not merely a superficial methodological reform, but a paradigmatic transformation that touches the ontological, epistemological, and axiological roots of Christian educational practice itself. This article has shown that philosophically reconstructed CRE holds great transformative potential to contribute to the building of tolerance awareness in Makassar City.

First, the ontological reconstruction of CRE places *imago Dei* as the foundation that affirms the universal dignity of every person and calls CRE to form students who can respond to the "Other" with respect and openness. Second, the epistemological reconstruction positions dialogue and hermeneutics as an enriched way of knowing, moving beyond doctrinal monologue that closes itself off from the richness of other perspectives.

Third, the axiological reconstruction positions tolerance as a formative value that permeates the entire CRE process, not merely an additional topic. Fourth, the pedagogical reconstruction shifts the method from passive transmission toward transformative praxis that empowers students as active subjects capable of critical thinking and responsible action within a diverse society.

The reconstructive CRE model, consisting of four integrative dimensions theological-biblical, philosophical-hermeneutical, pedagogical-praxis, and socio-cultural offers a comprehensive and contextual framework for the development of CRE that is relevant to the multicultural reality of Makassar City (Yewangoe, 2022).

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