

The Integration of Biblical Authority in the Construction of the Theological Education Curriculum: Theological and Pedagogical Analysis

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze the integration of biblical authority in the construction of the theological education curriculum through a theological and pedagogical approach. The authority of the Bible as the normative and final word of God has a central role in the formation of doctrine, ethics, and practices of church life, so it should be the main foundation in the development of the theological education curriculum. In practice, however, there is a tendency that the construction of the curriculum is more influenced by modern academic and pedagogical approaches without adequate integration into biblical theological foundations. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach that analyzes various sources of systematic theology and Christian education theory. The results of the study show that the integration of biblical authority in the theological education curriculum can be carried out through three main aspects, namely: (1) the placement of the Bible as a normative source in the entire curriculum structure, (2) the integration of theological values in learning design, and (3) the development of pedagogical models oriented towards spiritual formation and character. The findings of this study confirm that the construction of a theological education curriculum rooted in biblical authority not only results in academic competence, but also shapes spirituality, integrity of faith, and readiness for ministry. Thus, this research makes a conceptual contribution in developing an integrative theological education curriculum model between theological and pedagogical dimensions.

Keywords: Biblical authority; curriculum; theological education; systematic theology; Christian pedagogy

Received: December 14, 2025

Revised: December 28, 2025

Accepted: January 25, 2026

Published: January 30, 2026

Curr. Ver.: January 30, 2026



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1. Introduction

Theological education has a very important role in shaping the understanding of faith, character, and ministry competencies of prospective church leaders and Christian ministers. In the tradition of the Christian faith, the Bible is understood as the word of God that has the highest authority in determining the doctrines, ethics, and practices of church life. Therefore, theological education should make the Bible the main basis in the learning process, including in the development of the theological education curriculum. [1] In line with what was conveyed by VG Sitompul et al., adopting the view of the Lutheran figure, Martín Luther, explained in the Christian faith that the Bible is not only the basis of the Christian faith but also the absolute authority and basis in the teachings and practices of worship and the teaching of the word in the church. Thus, the entire process of teaching, coaching and theological education in the church and theological educational institutions must be based and rooted in the Akitab. [2] The author quotes what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which explains that all God-inspired writings are useful for teaching, exposing errors, correcting behavior and educating people in the truth, so that everyone who uses the Bible as a doctrinal basis will be equipped. So based on the above view, Akitab should have the highest authority in all religious practices, both in the church and in educational institutions.

Biblical authority has to do not only with the confession of faith in the divine inspiration of Scripture, but also with how the Bible is used as a normative basis in building theological understanding, forming spiritual character, and guiding the practice of church ministry. In the context of theological education, the Bible should not only be studied as an academic object, but also as a theological foundation that shapes the entire educational process, both in cognitive, spiritual, and practical aspects of ministry.[1] Rudy Budatmaja also explained that in the process of theological education and church teaching, the Bible is not only completed in the aspect of teaching that takes place academically, but the Bible should be placed as a strong theological foundation on which the entire process of religious activities takes place.[2] The Bible is not only understood as the word of God, but as a law and rule in religious activities, where every teaching and rule in educational and teaching activities must place the Bible as the supreme authority.

However, in the development of modern theological education, there are various pedagogical approaches that are influenced by the development of education, philosophy, and social sciences. This approach makes a positive contribution to the development of learning methods that are more contextual and relevant to the needs of the times. However, in some theological education contexts, such approaches sometimes emphasize methodological and academic aspects rather than theological foundations rooted in biblical authority. This condition has the potential to cause an imbalance between the theological and pedagogical dimensions in the construction of the theological education curriculum.[3] In many places, in today's modern developments, in various Christian educational institutions, the theological education curriculum prioritizes the quantity and quality of knowledge from the academic side rather than the in-depth understanding and interpretation of the Bible.[4] Thus, it is important to examine theologically and pedagogically how biblical authority can be systematically integrated in the construction of the theological education curriculum, so that the curriculum developed is not only academically relevant but also faithful to the theological foundations of the Christian faith.

The curriculum in theological education should not only be understood as a course arrangement or academic framework, but also as a means of forming the faith and spiritual character of students. A good curriculum needs to integrate theological principles with an

effective pedagogical approach so as to produce graduates who not only have academic ability but also have a strong spirituality and a deep understanding of the Bible.[4] Theologically, however, the Bible is understood as the word of God that has the highest authority for the life of the Christian faith and the teaching of the church. Therefore, the integration of biblical authority in the theological education curriculum is a very important aspect so that the educational process not only produces graduates who have academic ability, but also have a strong theological foundation and are rooted in the truth of God's word.[2] Therefore, the integration of biblical authority in the construction of the theological education curriculum is an important issue to be studied theologically and pedagogically.

2. Literature Review

A number of previous studies have addressed topics related to biblical authority and Christian education. Research conducted by Rudy Budiarmaja confirms that the Bible has the nature of inertia and is the main source of authority for the teaching of the Christian faith. The research shows that the truth of God's word in the Bible is a foundation that cannot be replaced by any other source of authority in church life or Christian education.[2] In addition, research conducted by Samuel Agus Setiawan and Andrias Pujiono emphasizes the importance of implementing the curriculum in Christian education to systematically shape students' faith and character. The research shows that a structured curriculum based on biblical values has an important role in the learning process of the Christian faith.[4] Other research has also shown that systematic theology is closely related to the practice of Christian education because correct theological doctrine will provide the basis for the process of teaching the faith in the church and theological educational institutions. Christian education rooted in biblical principles will be able to form a firmer understanding of faith that is relevant to the context of the believer's life.[3]

Nonetheless, most of those studies tend to address the two aspects separately. Research on biblical authority generally focuses on the study of systematic theology, apologetics, or the doctrine of the inspiration and intrinsic of Scripture. On the other hand, research on the Christian education curriculum emphasizes more on pedagogical aspects, such as learning methods, curriculum design, or faith education strategies. Thus, studies that specifically integrate the concept of biblical authority in the construction of the theological education curriculum through theological and pedagogical approaches are still relatively limited. These limitations show that there is a research gap in the study of theological education. There has not been much research that comprehensively examines how theological concepts of biblical authority can be systematically integrated into the process of constructing the theological education curriculum. In fact, the integration between the theological basis and the pedagogical approach is very necessary so that theological education not only produces graduates who have academic ability, but also have integrity of faith and commitment to the authority of God's word.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the concept of biblical authority in the perspective of Christian theology as well as examine how the concept can be integrated in the construction of the theological education curriculum through theological and pedagogical approaches. This research is expected to make a conceptual contribution to the development of theological education that is rooted in biblical authority as well as relevant to the development of modern pedagogy. The novelty of research in this article lies in the effort to integrate two fields of study that have often been studied separately, namely theology about biblical authority and the theory of construction of the theological education curriculum. This study not only discusses the authority of the Bible as a theological doctrine, but also examines its practical implications in the design of theological education curriculum. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of theological education studies as well as a practical contribution for theological education institutions in designing a curriculum rooted in

the authority of God's word.

3. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on a conceptual analysis of the integration of biblical authority in the construction of the theological education curriculum through theological and pedagogical perspectives.[5] The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from systematic theology books that discuss biblical authority, such as the concepts of inspiration, inerrancy, and Scriptural authority, as well as literature on the development of theological education curriculum. The secondary data was obtained from relevant scientific journal articles, especially those that discuss Christian education, curriculum, and theological pedagogy.

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely by searching, collecting, and reviewing various literature that is in accordance with the research topic. The sources used are selected based on relevance, academic credibility, and novelty of publications.[6] Data analysis uses content analysis with a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis stages include data reduction, categorization by theme (biblical authority, curriculum, and pedagogy), theological and pedagogical interpretation, and conceptual synthesis.[7]

This research uses two main approaches, namely the theological approach to examine the concept of biblical authority and the pedagogical approach to analyze the construction of the theological education curriculum. Both approaches are used integratively to produce a comprehensive conceptual model. To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation, which is comparing various relevant literature and conducting a critical evaluation of the sources used.[8]

4. Discussion and Results

The Essence of Biblical Authority in a Theological Perspective

Biblical authority is a fundamental concept in Christian theology that affirms that Scripture is the inspired word of God and has the highest authority in determining the doctrine, ethics, and practice of the life of faith. Within the framework of systematic theology, this authority is closely related to the doctrine of inspiration, inerrancy, and canonization of Scripture.[9] In line with what Swandriyani Hudianto et al. have said, the essence of the Bible's authority in Christian theology is a high belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God, thus having divine authority as the source of absolute and normative truth for the faith and life of believers.[10] Thus the Bible as the supreme authority in theological education is final and unchangeable for any reason, so all practice of theological education must be completely based on the Bible.

In the context of theological education, biblical authority is not only doctrinally understood, but must also serve as a normative principle that shapes the entire educational process. This means that the Bible should not be reduced to a mere object of academic study, but should be the main source in building an epistemological, axiological, and praxis framework for theological education.[11] This authority means that the entire teaching of the Bible is not only theologically correct, but also the highest standard in determining church doctrine, ethics, and practice.[12] Thus, the Bible does not rely on human authority or tradition, but rather has authority because it comes from God Himself.[13] Thus, the author himself is of the view that there is one principle that must be held, namely: the Bible should not be forced to conform to the times, but it is the times that must be forced to conform to the Bible, because the entire content of the Bible is absolute and absolute.

In line with the views of Reformers such as Martin Luther, the principle *of sola scriptura* affirms that the Bible is the single supreme authority in Christian faith and practice.[14] Therefore, biblical authority is not only theoretical, but also practical in directing understanding, shaping spirituality, and influencing the life actions of believers.[15] Thus, any construction of the theological education curriculum must be rooted in this principle so as not to lose its theological identity, and to keep the truth of the word completely intact, in line with what Paul conveyed to Timothy, frankly conveying the truth.

The Problem of Integration in Modern Theological Education

The development of modern education has brought a significant influence on theological education, particularly through contemporary pedagogical approaches such as constructivism, student-centered learning, and social science integration. This approach basically makes a positive contribution to increasing the effectiveness of learning.[16] In addition to influencing the effectiveness of learning, however, the main problem in the integration of modern theological education lies in the tension between contemporary theological and pedagogical approaches. On the one hand, theological education is required to remain faithful to biblical foundations, but on the other hand it must adapt to the development of education, technology, and social contexts.[17] The author sees that there is a dilemma in the process of theological education, on the one hand theological education must be able to meet the demands and developments of the times, on the other hand theological education must remain consistent with biblical truth. Therefore, the managers of theological education institutions are expected to be able to innovate and creatively manage existing dilemmas and problems into a color that makes theological education remain consistent with biblical truth and remain relevant to the development of the times.

Nevertheless, the study found a tendency that in some theological educational institutions, modern pedagogical approaches are more dominant than biblical theological foundations. This leads to an imbalance between the theological and pedagogical dimensions. One of the problems that arises is the dominance of academic and methodological approaches, so that the theological dimension often does not receive adequate attention. This causes learning to be more oriented towards knowledge transfer than the formation of faith and spiritual character.[18] In addition, the development of the digital age and cultural change also present new challenges, such as the need for contextual, relevant, and technology-based learning. However, this integration is not always balanced with the strengthening of theological values, so it has the potential to cause secularization in theological education.[19] However, the main focus today is how theological education has transformed in the midst of the times, but it does not lose the values of biblical truth, theological education is not trapped in a dilemma situation, but is able to turn existing problems into opportunities to explain the authority of the Bible in the middle ages.

Another problem is the difficulty in integrating the values of faith with contemporary social issues, such as pluralism, religious moderation, and cultural change. This requires the theology curriculum to be able to be adaptive without losing its theological identity.[20] As a result, the resulting curriculum emphasizes more academic and methodological aspects, but pays less attention to the formation of students' spirituality and faith integrity.[21] This condition has the potential to produce graduates who are intellectually competent but weak in theological commitment and spiritual life. Thus, the main challenge of modern theological education is how to establish a balanced integration between fidelity to biblical authority and pedagogical relevance in the context of the modern world.

Integration of Biblical Authority in Curriculum Structure

The results of the analysis show that the integration of biblical authority in the theological education curriculum must begin with the basic structure of the curriculum itself.

In this case, the Bible should be placed as:

- a. Primary source in determining learning objectives
- b. Foundations in the preparation of teaching materials
- c. References in learning evaluation

Thus, all courses, both theological and practical, must have a clear connection to biblical principles.[22] Syukurman Zebua et al. explained that the integration of biblical authority in the curriculum structure of theological education means placing the Bible as the main basis in all components of the curriculum, starting from the objectives, content, methods, to learning evaluation.[23] This integration does not mean rejecting modern scientific or pedagogical approaches, but rather leads to an integrative reconstruction of the curriculum, in which all disciplines are placed under the authority of the Bible as the source of truth.

In the structure of the curriculum, the Bible is not only one of the subjects, but it is the foundation that directs all theological disciplines, so that each field of study has a connection to biblical truth.[24] This confirms that the curriculum is theocentric or Christocentric, where the entire educational process is centered on the word of God.[25] In addition, this integration is also seen in the selection of materials and the preparation of learning outcomes that emphasize the formation of faith, character, and spirituality, not just cognitive aspects. Thus, the curriculum is not only academic, but also transformative.[26] Furthermore, the integration of biblical authority requires an integration between theory and practice, where biblical values are not only taught, but also implemented in the lives of learners through contextual and applicative learning processes.[27] Thus, a curriculum structure rooted in biblical authority will result in a holistic theological education, integrating knowledge, faith, and ministry practice.

Integration of Theological Values in Learning Design

In addition to the curriculum structure, the integration of biblical authority must also be reflected in the learning design. The learning process needs to be designed in such a way that it not only transfers knowledge, but also instills theological values.

This can be done through:

- a. Hermeneutic approach to understanding biblical texts
- b. Theological reflection in each learning material
- c. Faith-learning integration

Such a learning design will help students develop critical and contextual theological thinking skills.[28] The integration of theological values in learning design is an attempt to incorporate the values of the Christian faith into the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. Theological values are not only taught as material, but are internalized in the entire learning process so as to shape students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and actions.[29] Thus, theological learning does not stop at the cognitive aspect, but also touches on the affective and spiritual dimensions.

In learning design, this integration demands a holistic and Christocentric approach, where every learning activity is directed at the formation of faith, character, and a relationship with God. This can be done through the selection of reflective, dialogical, and contextual methods, so that students are able to relate Bible truth to real life.[17] In addition, the integration of theological values is also seen in the use of learning strategies that encourage critical theological thinking, rather than just doctrinal memorization. Thus, students not only understand the teachings of faith, but are able to live it in an ever-evolving social and cultural context.[30] In the digital age, this integration is increasingly important because learning must be able to utilize technology without losing spiritual values. Therefore, learning design needs to combine pedagogical innovation with the cultivation of Christian values in a consistent and directed manner.[31] Thus, the integration of theological values in the design of learning results in an educational process that is not only informative, but also transformative, that is, it shapes the faith, character, and life of the learner as a whole.

Development of Pedagogical Models Based on Spiritual Formation

Another important aspect is the development of a pedagogical model oriented towards spiritual formation and character. Theological education aims not only to produce theological scholars, but also servants of God who have integrity of faith.

The pedagogical model rooted in biblical authority emphasizes:

- a. Formation of Christian character
- b. Disiplin rohani (spiritual disciplines)
- c. Coaching a life of prayer and ministry

This approach is in line with the concept *of spiritual formation* which places life transformation as the primary goal of Christian education.[32] The development of a pedagogical model based on spiritual formation in theological education emphasizes that the learning process is not only oriented to the transfer of knowledge, but to the transformation of the lives and spiritual growth of the learner. Spiritual formation is understood as a process of formation that brings learners closer and closer to Christ through a holistic learning experience.[33] Thus, pedagogy in theological education must be holistic, encompassing intellectual, spiritual, and praxian aspects of ministry.

This pedagogical model places educators not only as teachers, but also as spiritual mentors who guide, exemplify, and build relationships that support students' growth in faith.[34] Thus, learning becomes a real space for building faith, not just academic activities. In addition, this approach emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects, so that students experience learning that touches all dimensions of life. Models such as *spirit-led learning* affirm the role of the Holy Spirit in the learning process as a transformative agent that deeply shapes faith.[35] The pedagogical model based on spiritual formation is also contextual and transformative, in which biblical values are linked to the realities of everyday life. This approach encourages learners to not only understand faith, but also to live it in service practice and social life.[36] Thus, the development of this model resulted in a holistic theological education, that is, to form intellect, spirituality, and character in an integrated manner.

Theological and Pedagogical Synthesis

The integration of biblical authority in the theological education curriculum ultimately results in a synthesis between the theological and pedagogical dimensions.

This synthesis is characterized by:

- a. Unity between doctrine and practice
- b. Balance between knowledge and spirituality
- c. Integration between faith and learning

In other words, the ideal theological education is one that is not only academically correct, but also theologically faithful. Theological and pedagogical synthesis is an attempt to fully integrate the theological basis (especially biblical authority) with modern pedagogical approaches in theological education. This synthesis emphasizes that the educational process should not only focus on normative theological truth, but should also pay attention to effective, contextual, and relevant ways of delivery (pedagogy).[37] Within this framework, theology serves as a normative foundation, while pedagogy becomes a medium of transformation that allows theological values to be internalized in learners. Thus, theological education not only conveys doctrine, but also shapes the way of thinking, behaving, and acting in accordance with the Christian faith. {Formatting Citation}

In practice, the synthesis between theology and pedagogy often faces the challenge of a dichotomy between an approach that is too theoretical and one that is too practical. Theological education that emphasizes only doctrinal aspects has the potential to become rigid and less relevant, while an overly pedagogical approach without a theological basis can lose the identity of the Christian faith.[18] Therefore, an integrative balance is needed, where:

- a. Theology gives direction and content of truth,
- b. Pedagogy determines the method and process of delivery.

This synthesis also demands a holistic approach to learning, covering cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects. In this case, the learning process not only results in intellectual understanding, but also a real life transformation.[30] In addition, in the context of the development of the times, theological and pedagogical synthesis must be able to respond to modern challenges such as digitalization, pluralism, and cultural change. This means that the pedagogy used must be innovative and contextual, but still rooted in biblical truth as the primary authority.[38] Thus, theological and pedagogical synthesis resulted in a model of theological education that:

- a. Faithful to Bible truth
- b. Relevant to the context of the times
- c. Transformative in shaping faith and character

Theological and pedagogical synthesis is the key to building a complete and balanced theological education. This integration ensures that education is not only theologically correct, but also pedagogically effective in shaping a mature and contextual life of faith.

Research Results

Based on the discussion above, this study produced several key findings as follows:

- a. The Bible as a Normative Source of the Curriculum

This research confirms that biblical authority should be placed as a normative basis in the entire construction of the theological education curriculum. This includes learning objectives, content, methods, and evaluation.

- b. Integration of Theological Values in the Learning Process

An effective curriculum is one that integrates theological values in the design of learning, so that the educational process is not only academic, but also spiritually transformative.

- c. Pedagogical Model Based on Spiritual Formation

The development of pedagogical models oriented towards the formation of spirituality and character proved to be an important aspect in the integration of biblical authority in theological education.

- d. Balance between Theological and Pedagogical Dimensions

This study found that proper integration of theological and pedagogical approaches results in a more holistic and relevant curriculum, without losing the foundation of the Christian faith.

Conceptual Contributions

This research contributes in the form of a conceptual model of the theological education curriculum that:

- a. Rooted in Biblical Authority
- b. Integrated with modern pedagogical approaches
- c. Oriented to faith formation and ministry

4. Conclusion

This research confirms that the authority of the Bible as the normative and final word of God should be the main foundation in the construction of the theological education curriculum. The Bible does not only function as an object of academic study, but as a source of truth that shapes all aspects of education, both in the theological, pedagogical, and praxian

dimensions of service.

In the context of modern theological education, there is a tension between fidelity to biblical theological foundations and the rapidly evolving demands of contemporary pedagogy. The dominance of academic and methodological approaches often displaces the central role of the Bible, potentially resulting in an imbalance between theological knowledge and the formation of spirituality.

The results of this study show that the integration of biblical authority in the theological education curriculum can be realized through three main aspects, namely: (1) the placement of the Bible as a normative source in the entire curriculum structure, (2) the integration of theological values in learning design, and (3) the development of pedagogical models based on spiritual formation and character. These three aspects affirm that the theology curriculum must be holistic, not only oriented to academic achievement, but also to the transformation of the faith and life of students.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of synthesis between the theological and pedagogical dimensions, where theology becomes the normative foundation, while pedagogy serves as a means of transformation. This integration results in a model of theological education that is balanced faithful to biblical truth, relevant to the times, and transformative in shaping faith, character, and readiness for ministry.

Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in the development of an integrative conceptual model of the theological education curriculum, capable of bridging the gap between fidelity to biblical authority and modern pedagogical needs. The curriculum built on this basis is expected to be able to produce graduates who are not only academically competent, but also have mature spirituality, strong faith integrity, and readiness to serve contextually in the midst of the challenges of the times.

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