

Humanism In Education Philosophy and Its Implication to Christian Education and Practice

ABOLADE, Gabriel Oluwaseyi

Postgraduate Student, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

Introduction

Education philosophy plays a critical role in shaping educational practices and approaches. Humanism as philosophy has gained popularity recently, particularly in secular schools and institutions. However, its implications for Christian education and training are poorly understood, so in this paper, we will explore the critical tenets of Humanism in education and their implications for Christian educators and practitioners. This paper explores the concept of Humanism in education philosophy and its implications for Christian education and practice.

Humanism in education philosophy is rooted in the belief that education should focus on the holistic development of individuals and place the individual at the centre of the learning process, emphasizing the development of human potential and fostering a well-rounded education. This approach focuses on critical thinking, creativity, and personal growth, empowering students to participate in their learning process actively. The implications of Humanism in education philosophy for Christian education and practice are significant, as they raise questions about the integration of faith and secular knowledge, the role of moral values, and the purpose of education within a Christian context.

Key Principles of Humanistic Education

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: One of the foundational principles of humanistic education is based on Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation. According to Maslow, individuals have a hierarchy of needs that must be met to attain their full potential. These needs include bodily necessities (such as food, shelter, and water), safety needs (such as security and stability), belongingness and love need (such as social relationships), esteem needs (such as recognition and self-worth), and self-actualization needs (the desire for personal growth and fulfilment).

Humanistic educators recognize the importance of addressing these basic needs to create an optimal learning environment.¹

2. Student-Centered Learning:

Humanistic education places a strong emphasis on student-centered learning. This approach recognizes that learners have different interests, abilities, and learning styles. It encourages educators to tailor instruction to meet individual students' needs and interests, allowing them to actively participate in their learning process. Student-centered learning promotes autonomy, self-direction, and intrinsic motivation.²

3. Holistic Development:

Humanistic education fosters holistic development by addressing academic knowledge, emotional intelligence, social skills, creativity, and physical well-being. It acknowledges that education should go beyond acquiring facts and abilities to encompass personal growth and character development. This approach aims to cultivate well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful societal contributions.³

4. Authentic Assessment:

Humanistic education advocates for authentic assessment methods beyond traditional tests and exams. It values assessing students' real-world skills, critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, and creativity. Accurate assessments may include projects, portfolios, presentations, and performance-based evaluations. These methods allow students to demonstrate their understanding and apply their knowledge in practical contexts.⁴

¹ A. H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 1943, 370-396.

² J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. Macmillan Publishers, 1916.

³ C. R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn: A View of What Education Might Become*. Charles E Merrill Publishing Company, 1969.

⁴ G. P. Wiggins, *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.

5. Positive Learning Environment:

Humanistic education emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and supportive learning environment. This includes fostering positive teacher-student relationships, promoting collaboration and cooperation, and cultivating a sense of belonging and acceptance. A positive learning environment encourages open communication, respect for diversity, and the development of empathy and compassion.⁵

Overview of Christian Education Principles

Christian education principles are the foundational beliefs and practices that guide teaching and learning within a Christian educational context. These principles are rooted in the Christian faith and aim to integrate biblical truths, values, and worldviews into all aspects of education. Christian education seeks to nurture students' spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical development, equipping them to live out their faith in all areas of life.

1. **Integration of Faith and Learning:** One of the fundamental principles of Christian education is the integration of faith and learning. This principle emphasizes that all subjects and disciplines should be taught from a biblical perspective, recognizing God's sovereignty over all areas of life. It seeks to help students understand how their faith relates to academic knowledge and encourages critical thinking from a Christian worldview.⁶

2. **Biblical Foundation:** Christian education is grounded in the belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and helps as the ultimate authority for truth and moral guidance. The principles derived from Scripture provide a framework for teaching and learning, shaping curriculum content, instructional methods, and ethical standards within a Christian educational institution.⁷

3. **Character Formation:** Christian education strongly emphasizes character formation, seeking to

⁵ N. Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press, 2005.

⁶ T. H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing our Story and Vision*. Jossey-Bass, 2007.

⁷ A. F. Holmes, *The idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today's University*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

develop students' moral and ethical values based on biblical teachings. It aims to cultivate virtues such as love, compassion, honesty, integrity, humility, and service through intentional instruction, modelling, and opportunities for practical application.⁸

4. Community and Discipleship: Another essential principle of Christian education is recognizing the importance of community and discipleship. It emphasizes the role of teachers, parents, mentors, and fellow believers in nurturing students' spiritual growth. Christian educational institutions often foster a sense of community where students can build relationships with others who share their faith and engage in discipleship activities such as prayer groups, Bible studies, and service projects.⁹

5. Excellence in Education: Christian education principles uphold the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of education. It encourages students to fully develop their God-given talents and abilities, promoting academic rigor, critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning.¹⁰ Christian educators strive to provide quality instruction and create a supportive learning environment that fosters intellectual growth and personal development. Christian education principles aim to provide a holistic approach to education that integrates faith, knowledge, character development, community, and excellence.

The Role of Christian Educators in Embracing Humanistic Principles

Christian educators play a crucial role in shaping the minds and hearts of students within a Christian educational setting. While their primary focus is to provide students with a strong foundation in Christian beliefs and values, there is also an increasing recognition of the importance of embracing humanistic principles. By embracing humanistic principles, Christian educators can foster an environment that encourages students to develop their unique talents and abilities while

⁸ G. R. Knight, & J. M. De Vries, *The Heart of the Teacher: True Stories of Inspiration and Encouragement*. Moody Publishers, 2018.

⁹ H. Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Teaching and Learning (4th ed.)*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009.

¹⁰ N., Wolterstorff, & C. Wolterstorff, *Educating for life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning*. Baker Academic, 2011.

recognizing their responsibility towards others.¹¹ This can be achieved through promoting empathy, reverence for diversity, and a commitment to social justice. Humanistic principles can also encourage students to think critically about their faith and engage in meaningful dialogue with others with different beliefs or perspectives. Humanism, as a philosophical and ethical stance, emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, promoting their well-being, dignity, and potential. In this context, Christian educators can integrate humanistic principles into their teaching practices to foster holistic development and empower students to become compassionate and responsible individuals.¹²

The Implications of Humanism in Education Philosophy

The implications of Humanism in education philosophy are far-reaching and have influenced various aspects of educational theory and practice.

One key implication of Humanism in education philosophy is the emphasis on student-centered learning, which advocates for personalized instruction that considers individual differences and allows students to participate actively in their learning process.¹³ Student-centered learning encourages collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and self-reflection.

Another implication is the importance of fostering positive relationships between teachers and students. Teachers can establish trust with their students and facilitate open communication by creating a supportive and respectful classroom climate. This enables students to feel valued, understood, and motivated to learn.¹⁴

¹¹ "Christian Education." In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, edited by Erwin Fahlbusch et al. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, 345.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ G. L. Gutek, *Philosophical and Ideological Perspectives on Education* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education, 2014.

¹⁴ A. C. Ornstein, & F. P. Hunkins, *Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues* (7th ed.). Pearson Education, 2017.

Furthermore, Humanism in education philosophy emphasizes the holistic development of learners. It recognizes that education should not solely focus on academic achievement but also on nurturing students' emotional intelligence, social skills, ethical values, and physical well-being.¹⁵ This approach promotes integrating arts, sports, character education, and community service into the curriculum to provide a well-rounded educational experience.

Finally, humanistic education emphasizes promoting intrinsic motivation and a love for learning. It encourages educators to create meaningful learning experiences that connect with students' well-being and aspirations. Humanism aims to cultivate lifelong learners intrinsically motivated to pursue knowledge and personal growth by fostering curiosity, autonomy, and a sense of purpose.¹⁶

Practical Applications of Humanism in Christian Education Practice

Practical applications of Humanism in Christian education practice can be seen in various aspects of teaching and learning. These applications aim to foster the development of students' intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. The following sections explore vital areas where Humanism can be applied in Christian education.

1. **Student-Centered Learning:** Humanism emphasizes individual learners' importance and unique needs, interests, and abilities. This approach can be applied in Christian education by adopting student-centered learning methods that encourage active participation, critical thinking, and self-reflection. Educators can create an environment that promotes personal growth and spiritual development by recognizing students as active agents in their learning process.¹⁷

2. **Holistic Education:** Humanism recognizes the interconnectedness of different aspects of human life. Christian education can reflect this holistically, integrating faith-based teachings with

¹⁵ K. Ryan, & Cooper, J. M. *Those Who Can: Why Master Teachers Do What They Do* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, 2020.

¹⁶ D. Walker, & J. F. Soltis, *Curriculum Landscapes and Trends* (2nd ed.). Routledge, 2019.

¹⁷ J. Graham & Weiner, L. *Developing the Whole Person: A Humanistic Approach to Education*, 1996, 45

academic subjects, arts, physical education, and character development.¹⁸ By providing a well-rounded education that addresses students' intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions, educators can help them develop into well-rounded individuals

3. Ethical Education: Humanism places a strong emphasis on ethical values such as empathy, compassion, justice, and respect for others. In Christian education practice, these values align with the instructions of Jesus Christ and can be integrated into moral education programs.¹⁹ By fostering a sense of social responsibility and encouraging students to apply ethical principles in their daily lives, educators can help them develop a solid moral compass.

4. Critical Thinking: Humanism promotes the development of critical thinking skills, which are essential for intellectual growth and problem-solving. In Christian education practice, critical thinking can be encouraged by engaging students in open discussions, enabling them to question and analyze information, and providing opportunities for independent research. Educators can help students cultivate a deeper understanding of their faith and the world by nurturing essential thinking skills.²⁰

5. Inclusive Education: Humanism emphasizes the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. This principle can be applied in Christian education by creating an inclusive learning environment that welcomes students from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives. Educators can create a supportive community that reflects Christian love and acceptance by promoting respect for diversity and fostering a sense of belonging among all students.²¹

Examples of Successful Integration of Humanism and Christianity in Education

There have been several successful examples of integrating Humanism and Christianity in

¹⁸ R. Hill, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education*, 2008, 78.

¹⁹ T. Hunt, & Carper, J. *The World of the Classroom: A Holistic Approach to Education*, 2010, 112.

²⁰ Graham & Weiner, 1996, 67.

²¹ Hunt & Carper, 2010, 92.

education. These examples can be found in various educational institutions, curricula, and teaching methods. Here are a few notable examples:

1. The Integration of Faith and Learning at Wheaton College has successfully integrated Humanism and Christianity into its educational philosophy. The college emphasizes the integration of faith and learning across all disciplines. Faculty members are encouraged to incorporate Christian perspectives into their teaching, fostering an environment where students can explore the intersection between their faith and academic pursuits. This approach is reflected in the college's mission statement, which states that Wheaton seeks to provide “a rigorous education firmly rooted in the liberal arts tradition within a Christian context.”²²

2. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, based at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, is another example of the successful integration of Humanism and Christianity in education. The center researches character education and promotes the development of qualities such as honesty, compassion, and justice. While not explicitly focused on Christianity, the center's work aligns with Christian values and principles.²³ It provides resources for educators to incorporate character education into their teaching practices, emphasizing the importance of moral development alongside academic achievement.

3. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) is a global organization that supports and provides resources for Christian schools worldwide. ACSI promotes the integration of Humanism and Christianity in education by offering educators professional development opportunities, curriculum resources, and networking opportunities. The organization encourages schools to create an environment that nurtures students' spiritual growth while providing a high-quality academic education.²⁴

²² “The Integration of Faith and Learning” Wheaton College website (<https://www.wheaton.edu/about-wheaton/mission-and-values>), accessed on 12/09/2023, 8:37 pm.

²³ Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues website (<https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/>), accessed on 12/09/2023, 8:37 pm.

²⁴ Association of Christian Schools International website (<https://www.acsi.org/>), accessed on 12/09/2023, 8:37 pm.

These examples demonstrate that successfully integrating Humanism and Christianity in education is possible. They highlight the importance of creating an educational environment that values intellectual and spiritual development. By incorporating Christian principles into teaching practices and curriculum design, educators can provide students with a holistic education that prepares them for academic success and a meaningful life grounded in faith.

Conclusion

Humanism, an education viewpoint, offers cherished insights into creating a learner-centered educational environment that promotes all-inclusive development and critical thinking skills. While Humanism is often associated with secular philosophies, its principles can be integrated into Christian education without compromising religious beliefs. By embracing humanistic approaches, Christian educators can create a nurturing learning environment that fosters students' intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth.

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