

## A Study of a Model of Christian Alternative Schools

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### Abstract

**Background/Objective:** This study intends to inquire into theoretical background of general alternative education and alternative schools, and deal with the significance necessity, definition, philosophy of education, purpose, curriculum and quality and qualifications of teachers with respect to Christian alternative schools.

**Methods/Statistical analysis:** This paper seeks to offer an alternative to Christian schools in the Korean public school system as it faces an overall challenge in recent years. The education philosophy, goal, purpose of establishment, instruction methods and specific cases are analyzed for Christian schools that have been established based on the spirit of Christianity in Korea, as an alternative to existing schools. The study seeks to identify a model for Christian alternative schools that can be applied to the Korean environment and what would be the best characteristics for such schools.

**Findings:** There are many existing studies that analyzed cases of various alternative schools in Korea. However, there is a lack of studies that compiled data on how Christian alternative education and Christian alternative schools are practiced. This study will contribute to serving as a useful reference material for those who want to establish Christian alternative schools. Moreover, this study intended

to inquire into a model of Christian alternative schools applicable in Korea as well as the aspect of the most desirable Christian alternative school. To be concrete, regarding the most desirable Christian alternative schools, this study proposed principles and realistic alternatives for people who intend to establish and operate Christian alternative schools on the basis of concrete Christian worldview in terms of philosophy of education, purpose, educational purposes, educational goals, curriculum, characteristic project (education), qualifications and role of teachers. Specifically, the paper seeks to present the principles and realistic alternatives based on a Christian world view applied to the education philosophy, goal, purpose of establishment, curriculum, specific projects (instruction) and qualification of instructors.

**Improvements/Applications:** As such, this paper is expected to offer valuable insight into those seeking to establish a Christian alternative school. This study will make it possible to understand a model of Christian alternative schools which is the most desirable and applicable in Korea.

**Key Words :** Leadership; Christian Alternative School; Education; Philosophy of Education; Curriculum; School.

## 1 Significance of Christian Alternative School

This term "Christian alternative school" is considered a term used for the first time in this present study. "Christian alternative school" refers to a faith community school where students directly experience and practice their faith in the wings of Christian faith, supplied with characteristics and form of general alternative schools. Most of all, regarding the purpose of establishment and philosophy of education, they are based on Christian worldview for educational purposes and goals of educational activities. Through the concepts of a small school, special learning methods, love for nature, work-based activities, community life and faith education and training different from what is provided by general Christian schools, it offers the most desirable education fostering true disciples of Jesus

Christ.

Kim Tae-yeon asserts that "A Christian alternative school is a learning community where all educational activities are carried out based on Christian worldview intending to actively expand the Kingdom of God on earth, and students are prepared to have frontier spirit for the Kingdom of God by being trained as disciples of Christ in the 'vivid harmony' with other beings and all members (teachers, students, parents and staff) are making utmost efforts for true education of the supreme quality."

Unlike other schools, Christian alternative schools are characterized by a community of faith. In Christian schools, people did not gather in search of interests but under the confession of faith with the concern of education. Therefore, basically, Christian community attributes feature such schools. In a broad sense, a Christian alternative school can be considered a part of church. However, a Christian alternative school presents dissimilarities from a church in the sense that it is a specialized educational institution. Basically, a school focuses on education, among many other areas of human life. Moreover, the intrinsic function of school lies in accumulating professional skills and methods required for education and effectively handing down them. Comparably, the main function of church resides in glorifying and worshiping God. Furthermore, church also plays a role in proclaiming and delivering Word of God.

A Christian alternative school teaches the same truth as church and the ultimate objective lies in the same but it has intrinsic roles of its own different from those of church. Christian schools are required to cooperate with churches, and churches also need to respect the intrinsic roles of Christian schools and help schools. The mutual cooperation and balance are highly important.

In summary, a school serving the Kingdom of God and people of the Kingdom is a Christian school. A Christian alternative school is a place fostering the saved people who thoroughly recognize the creation and reign of God. It has to be a completely biblical school. A school based on the core of biblical messages is a Christian alternative school.

## **2 Philosophy of Education of Christian Alternative Schools**

”The philosophy of education of Christian alternative schools, in short, resides in God-centered education. This is a contrast to humanism commonly pursued by general education. Theocentrism as a philosophy of education of Christian schools means that education does not happen centered on humans but on God. In God-centered education, the agent of education is not humans but God, and the ultimate goal is also with God. Moreover, it signifies that the contents and methods of education are also based on the will and truth of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian alternative schools must establish their identity from the biblical and Christian worldview, and are required to have distinct conviction and devotion in philosophy of education. The philosophy of education must be described on the basis of Christian faith and fulfilled in the reality of education.

## **3 Educational Purposes and Educational Goals of Christian Alternative Schools**

### **1) Educational Purposes**

Considering that the educational purposes of Christian alternative schools are identical to those of Christian schools, this study intends to make reference to educational purposes of Christian schools first. Regarding the purposes of Christian schools based on Christian worldview, Van Brummelen mentioned core biblical commands of Christian worldview in four directions, and these four concepts are not separable but complementary and supportive.

Firstly, students are to research the created world of God based on creation command and cultural mandate (Genesis 1: 26-28, 2: 15), and while studying, students are to have mission as servants of the created world. Even though the created world is decadent, students must have mission as servants. In spite of being a corrupt created world, it is fundamental that a Christian school should proclaim marvel to the creation of God, and lead students to tread on the path of Lord by serving God and neighbors with the talents given by God. Teachers are required to instruct students how God

created the world for the benefit of people and how people should take care of the world. Moreover, teachers should help students in realizing that each one has been called to serve God as the body of Christ and individually members of I, in each field of the society. Teachers with frontier mind should guide students to dedicate themselves to serving the Kingdom of God with joy and act with creativity while they are experiencing, learning and applying academic rules.

Secondly, based on the given command (Matthew 28:18-20), teachers should make clear that in God we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Teachers must encourage each student to have a personal relationship with God, and as a teacher who tied a personal relationship with Christ should be a leading model of obedient and joyful life. It is necessary for teachers to recognize authority of Christ to make an effort to reveal Christ in the teaching of the classroom, and teach students all things taught by Christ. Also, teachers should teach students that Christ set an example for teaching and asked a meaningful answer. For example, teachers are to teach that Christ set an example for serving and modesty required as Christians by washing the disciples' feet.

Thirdly, based on the great commandments (Matthew 22:37-39), teachers are to love their students as themselves when they teach students. When there is love, teachers can truly teach students. When teachers teach students with love, this will be a key to "not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewal of the mind" of students (Romans 12:2). Education means changes. Only love can change students. Students should be encouraged to make a commitment to Christ and Christian way of life and willingly serve God and neighbors.

Fourthly, based on faith fellowship (Galatians 6:2, 6:10; Acts 2:42-47), praise and thankfulness must be included and specified in the curriculum. Teachers and students must feel thankful to the grace of God both personally and collectively. Through serving school and society, the school community should encourage students to praise a variety of graces. Students are to be guided to show thankfulness for the grace of others and learn how to help one another. Christian alternative schools must create fellowship in Holy Spirit, work and study together in order for students to experience a great community of which Head is Christ.

The purpose of Christian alternative schools ultimately resides in teaching students to recognize that they are the image of God. The classroom should provide students with background in which students realize Christian view of the world for real as well as fulfill and develop this view of the world. The classroom must become a community glorifying and praising God, where students realize God's love and become the members of Christ, in the middle of mutual trust between teachers and students and exploration of created world of God"<sup>2</sup>

In the book published by Research Society of Christian Schools of ACTS Education Research Center, which has been forming and preparing a Research Center since 1998 to establish a Christian alternative school, Christian School we are dreaming of, the concept of Christian alternative school is defined as follows:

The base of a school we are dreaming of resides in evangelical faith. In other words, it is a school founded on the salvation only by believing in Christ. The education provided in this school must be based on Christian worldview and the criteria must originate from the Holy Scripture of the Word of God. The base of biblical human view lies in the fact that humankind was created by the image of God. Therefore, humankind is a holistic being and uniquely created to maintain each one's individuality. Human has capacity and possibility of ruling, but is a limited being only discovered in God at the same time. Being a mere God's handiwork, human and nature cannot serve as a basic fundament for knowledge and values. Only God can be absolute standards. In particular, for humankind in complete decadence, the only base to understand true holistic knowledge is by way of restoring relationship between God and humankind through Christ, and the Holy Scripture serves as a criterion for this knowledge. The purpose of saved life of humans described in the Holy Scripture consists in ultimately serving God by restoring orders of God in the individual life, as well as serving others and administrating nature.

Therefore, based on the Words presented by the Holy Scripture, it is possible to establish the educational purposes of school as follows:

Firstly, it is to lead students to have a personal relationship with God and achieve recovery in each one's life (Matthew 28:18-20). Secondly, it is to lead each student to realize his or her own

calling given by God and become a competent disciple of Christ serving God and neighbors (Genesis 1:26-28)

## **2) Educational Goals**

Firstly, in terms of revealing the base and frame of Christian discernment in life, students must seek Christian vision of life and existence based on standards of Word of God as well as Christian way of life.

Secondly, in terms of promoting development by concept, capacity and creativity, students are supposed to realize how each one was called to serve God as members of Christ in each sector of the society, and develop the capacity of using, taking care of, forming and enjoying the world of God to the maximum.

Thirdly, by leading students to experience the meaning of life based on Christian worldview, students are supposed to willingly make personal and collective decisions from the biblical perspective and develop values and inclination in harmony with Christian principles.

Fourthly, students are encouraged to devote themselves to Christ and Christian way of life and readily serve God and neighbors. Students are guided to experience how to give God the entirety of life including thoughts, words and behaviors; furthermore, they are supposed to dedicate themselves to cooperating with other members in developing Christian way of life.<sup>3</sup>

## **4 Curriculum of Christian Alternative Schools**

The curriculum of Christian alternative school aims to make students praise sovereignty of Christ over all creatures. The purpose of curriculum of Christian alternative school is to discover wisdom and knowledge originated in the revelation of God, and to make students become committed servants of God through this. This must be a means of enlightenment of the world of God as well as the position of each student within. In the end, the curriculum must recognize God-centered base in terms of core and purposes, and it should be structured allowing students to have understanding and discriminative awareness of the world of God and love and serve God in the world in which they live.

For this reason, regarding the center of the curriculum of Christian alternative schools, it means that for God and His minister of creation, bondage and conservation, the Holy Scripture serves as a starting point for the center of the curriculum, namely, origin, definition and purpose. Besides, this means that nothing is value neutral in the curriculum, and the learning activities are focused on worshiping and serving God in all aspects of life.

True knowledge starts with God of revelation and includes all forms of life, demanding that students and teachers dedicate themselves to God and serve God in all spheres of the world. Like this, the curriculum of Christian alternative schools must be structured in order that the revelation of God should be at the root of it.

The curriculum of Christian alternative schools possesses both religious aspects and educational aspects at the same time. Knowledge is ultimately displayed in the analytic frames of standards influencing students' world view and way of life; therefore, these two terms enrich each other and are closely related.

"When God created humankind, He created us allowing a deeper understanding of truth and its new application to different situations and generations. Furthermore, human activities constantly pursue new phases of truth that God already reserved in the structure of the universe. For this reason, it is possible to add new materials to the curriculum and a general reexamination is equally required according to the lighting direction of the Holy Scripture. Considering that knowledge as a whole is for the glory of God, life as an entirety and whole people, this is what the curriculum aims at."<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the most fundamental mission of Christian alternative schools and teachers can be summarized as the integration of faith into learning (subjects).

"Moreover, there are educational aspects in the curriculum of Christian alternative schools. Christians, as good servants of God, should show exceptional zeal for learning of the world created by God. An authentic Christian alternative school ought to achieve the integration of religious aspects into educational aspects, in other words, a true biblical integration between church attributes and school attributes. This does not allow complementary correlations. The integration of two horizontal and vertical elements must be realized as shown in the following diagram (Figure 1). Figure 1 explains that all curriculums of Christian alternative schools should



consolidate the curriculums by origin of the Bible, and be educated and structured with Bible- based content.



Figure 1: Relationship between Bible and Subject<sup>5</sup>

In other words, in the center of all curricula, there must be the Word of God. Through the Word of God, all sciences must be reinterpreted. The entirety of these acts must be moving forward the glory of God. This integration should form the characteristics of the curriculum of Christian alternative schools.”<sup>6</sup>

## 5 Qualifications and Roles of Teachers of Christian Alternative Schools

To be teachers of Christian alternative schools, they must be equivalent to the Disciples of Christ who are devout filled with the Holy Spirit and have a strong sense of duty. This chapter intends to describe the qualifications of teachers as follows:

Firstly, teachers must play a role as kings. This does not necessarily mean that teachers must sovereign over students. It simply means that they should use correct authority to operate the class and instruct students. Naturalist and progressivist teachers are like gardeners, so they are not supposed to impose any restrictions on students.

Secondly, teachers should play a role as prophets. In other words, teachers must proclaim the will of God to students. Not only through the Holy Scripture but also through general knowledge from the subjects, teachers must convey the truth of God to students. The given mission of teachers resides in teaching students to follow the intention of God by discerning plans of God toward nature and society. Exactly like the prophets who proclaimed the will of God to Israelis who led their lives arbitrarily, teachers are responsible for making a clear proclamation of what to live for.<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly, "Teachers must have love for students and assurance of possibilities of students. It is because education which is not based on love is not able to change the life of students. Students can grow to the same extent as the belief of teachers in possibilities of their students. Everyone is a being with the image of God, so no one can restrict the possibilities. Therefore, only the ones who know how to love students and see the possibilities in them in accordance with these biblical perspectives are qualified to be teachers.

Fourthly, they must be the ones who have professional knowledge of the subject and make efforts to develop creative teaching methods. It is because it is not possible to attract interests of students in learning without a broad and deep understanding of the subject. All knowledge and sciences existent in the world are under the rule of God; therefore, we Christians should not neglect knowledge and sciences. For this reason, teachers should prepare a variety materials related to subjects beyond textbooks, in particular, by steadily researching the connection between the content of subject and the real world, teachers should find the best way to avoid uniform teaching methods to deliver the truth meaning. Diverse methods of teaching and learning should be developed to apply to classes depending on the content of subjects and level and reaction of students.

Fifthly, they must be the ones who have Christian historical consciousness to build dreams in students. Only the one who has a dream can make another dream. Only the teachers, who fulfill the dreams given by God based on correct historical consciousness, are able to lead students in a correct manner. This way, students can finally become the ones who dream the dream given by God"<sup>8</sup>

Sixthly, "Teachers must zealously read the Holy Scripture and meditate on the Word. The Word of God wants to rule characters

and thinking of all teachers. Only when the characters of teachers do not have dominating attitudes but serving attitudes like Christ, teachers can teach students with truly serving mind.

Seventh, teachers must have biblical perspectives not only in the aspect of characters but in the aspect of knowledge at the same time. It is because it is hard to say that a teacher with a good character has good biblical knowledge accordingly.”<sup>9</sup>

Eighth, all teachers are to be cheered up and encouraged by the Holy Scripture. The Holy Scripture says that God is our true teacher. The Bible also indicates that God gives lessons to us, reproaches us and educates us in a correct and righteous way through the Word of God. For this reason, the one who is filled with the Word of God can become a good teacher.

Lastly, teachers play a role as chief officiating priests. This role means that teachers beg God for the benefit of students. Even when students commit fault for being immature, teachers must be ready to kneel down in front of God, on behalf of the guilty students. Teachers, who do not offer intercessory prayers on behalf of their students, are considered the ones who are not properly fulfilling their duties as teachers.

The following extract is taken from a text written by Lim Taegyung (Gwangyeong High School teacher, Seoul) belonging to a Research Society preparing the establishment of a Christian alternative school.

”Teachers should meet the following three qualifications. Firstly, teachers must have educational vision expecting that students under their responsibility will transform and the Kingdom of God will expand through their students. Secondly, teachers are required to obey constant training of Christian thoughts and character and must continuously build Christian maturity. Thirdly, teachers should have precise and profound knowledge of specialized area and research and practice teaching method oriented to creativity and biblical approach. Delivering the content of education in a proper and correct way toward Christian orientation depends on the role of each teacher. Ecclesiastical content can be delivered in a non-Christian manner and non-Christian content can bring Christian educational effects through Christian illumination. Most of all, the influence of character given by teachers can be the most crucial key to Christian education.”<sup>10</sup>

This was extracted from a research content aiming at establishment of a Christian alternative school in a gathering for founding Dream High School. Dream High School is a research gathering composed of professors and teachers intending to devote themselves to establish a Christian school through Research Society of Christian Schools. Lim Tae-gyu (Gwangyeong High School teacher) is a leader of the gathering and this school is supposed to open in 2003.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This study inquired into philosophy of education, purpose, purpose of establishment, educational methods, curriculum, qualifications and roles of teachers of Christian alternative schools, founded on the basis of Christian spirit among alternative schools in South Korea, as an alternative to the current reality in which Christian schools, which are within the public education system, lose the essence and wander about in front of overall crises of the immediate education. Moreover, this study intended to inquire into a model of Christian alternative schools applicable in Korea as well as the aspect of the most desirable Christian alternative school.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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