



God is the Creator of the Earth, But Man is the Keeper: Kid's Responsibility in Caring the Environment Education and Religion

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ABSTRACT

Background: This section explains the context and rationale behind the study. The author highlights the importance of including children's perspectives in discussions about education and religion in Indonesia, as they form the foundation for a moral and sustainable society. Academic discourse has long relied on adult viewpoints, neglecting the voices of children. Therefore, the study emphasizes that children, too, bear a spiritual and moral responsibility to care for God's creation — the earth.

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to examine the practice of education and religion in Indonesia through the experiences of children at the Jungle School in Salatiga, focusing on the preservation of nature and the environment. The author seeks to demonstrate that children's experiences can meaningfully contribute to the development of environmental theology and a better understanding of humanity's collective duty toward the planet.

Methods: The research uses a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, where the stories and lived experiences of children are collected and interpreted as the main source of data. The author — who is also the founder and director of the Jungle School — employs narrative inquiry to uncover meaning from children's daily interactions with education, faith, and nature. This method values experience-based storytelling as a way to understand life and theology through real, lived narratives.

Results: The findings show that the children's experiences at the Jungle School offer a unique perspective on the intersection between faith, education, and environmental responsibility. Learning directly within nature, the children display awareness of their role as keepers of the earth. This nature-based education fosters spiritual growth, moral responsibility, and a theological appreciation of creation — elements often neglected in formal religious education systems.

Contribution: The article contributes a new perspective to environmental theology and religious education by emphasizing the inclusion of children's voices and experiences. It invites educators, theologians, and researchers to integrate child-centered perspectives into their work and to cultivate ecological

awareness rooted in creation theology. Ultimately, it calls for collective efforts to build a better and more sustainable future for humanity and the earth.

Keywords: children's responsibility; environmental education; environmental theology; religion; urban communities

INTRODUCTION

Kids have their tastes and styles of living and experiencing a caring the environment education and religion arena. But it's a pity, what they have is rarely heard of (not to mention is being neglected). About the living and experiencing so far has been as just an adult's toy. It has indeed become a general understanding that everything that is intended to produce a "good society" must be held from early childhood education. So, why has it seemed as if the voices of small children have been sealed on the glamorous academic stage so far?

So far, when it comes to academic discourse on campuses with international reputations and on the magnificent world stage, in terms education and religion for academic purposes, for too long Indonesian scholars have leaned on abroad ideas and so on by adult actions. In general, their point of view is presented based on political science, not real everyday experiences or related to the natural actions of children in the school environment, as I discussed in this article.

In February 2023, Sarah Coombs, Sarah Richards from Bristol University edited the essay collection and explored critical perspectives on research with children by using empirical examples from Israel, India, Thailand, and England as a leading values and concepts in global child-based research through the lens of reflexivity. From them we are helped considers issues such as the identities and roles of researchers, as well as the burdens, boundaries, and ethical frameworks which govern their activities. By using their empirical examples expert contributors discuss a range of topics including online safety, disabilities, gang membership, safeguarding, sexting, and child prostitution (Sarah Richards, Sarah Coombs, 2023, 1-9).

By this article, me my self as the author as well as Jungle School founder and Director- is intended to explain caring the environment education and religion arena through the experiences of Jungle School Kids. A non-formal natural school was established in 2012 in Dukuh, Sidomukti, Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia which has programs from early childhood education to junior high school where students come from various countries, such as Asia, Africa, Europe, and North and South

America, in the world. My basic and polite intention is, are we adults with advanced academic degrees who also live in a community on scholarship not willing to provide opportunities and space for children's experiences every day? If so, we will see, that the experiences of kids in Indonesia as object study also have an important new contribution to the adult's topic.

METHODS

In this article, I review the practice of education and religion in Indonesia through the experiences of children in Jungle School in Salatiga City, Central Java, with a focus on preserving nature and the universe. This paper-narrative study - children's experiences can be useful as a unit analysis (Morisson, 2023, 13-26)- is used as a methodology in which the individual and participants' stories have been collected and interpreted, explained by my self as the author as well as Jungle School founder and Director- is intended to value the experiences of Jungle School Kids in positive purposes. Kids experiences (as I observe every day) are able to construct as a narrative framework to uncover our perceived truths about our experiences as we interacted, studied, through a qualitative research methods course. Undeniable, narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience (Richards, 2011, 782-819). Their stories is our narratives which captured our lives, and illuminated our joys, worries, intentions, and beliefs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As always, Christian educators seek to understand how each life stage influences the next. Oftenly by teaching in multiple approaches, educators has found that the childhood years are filled with experiences that contribute to spirituality in young adulthood. So far, from Christian educators we are able to to understand how the examining the biblical and theological aspects of childhood religious education. Stacey J. Davies from Biola University, La Mirada, California by integrating theological study with social science at least have found very interesting lesson, the connection between childhood experiences and young adult spirituality are understanding God's larger narrative; enhancing Christian identity; and developing godly character (Davis, 2021, 156-171). For me, having researched in the same area of study, what Stacey discovered has clearly demonstrated the importance of

providing space and space to include the experiences of young children for the benefit of adults in field studies.

Let me elaborating how Jungle School students learning and playing freely while also exploring faith, beliefs, religious practices, and values in a non-coercive environment. Even though there are “special religious” groups of people who deny that this world and the universe were created by God, however, I still believe that it is clearly the result of the creation of Almighty God, as it says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, God saw all that he had made – and it was very good,” I cited from the Holy Bible in Genesis 1: 1-31. Eventhough, the universe is going to damaged by human adult ambition in the inner secrets as we journey against God (Timbo, 2018, 12). Some one has to take an serious action. School has to created for it. No doubt, as explained in theis website, UNESCO's environmental sustainability management is strongly committed to environmental protection and climate action. A broad range of UNESCO programmes specifically support Member States to implement the Paris Agreement and reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through education, the sciences, culture and communication and information (UNESCO, 2022). What about the kid’s articipation?

In the daily life of Jungle School students, they even attend nature school. Learning within the nature and whole environment surrounding it is a mandatory lesson learning in Jungle School. It is a praxis education not fashionable theory as written on the book paper. Every day. At Jungle School, we are always looking ahead. Because we are a local, Indonesian school with an international community of students, we do everything we can to make sure our kids are qualified for any fun and good quality so does certified by government as needed. These are the ways we prepare kid to study at the school of their dreams (Rio D.G. Tambunan, 2023).

Kids learn environment base on school subject as other school always do on the papers, but it is different then others who build the lesson base on printing, our school living in reality, Jungle school kids learn in nature, the play in “universe” not in the classroom by watching “NatGeo Channel” or even let passing by YouTube alone. Unlike other schools where religious attire is mandatory, this school offers a unique opportunity for students to interact with peers from various backgrounds and cultures. Using our own style “Sharing an independent curriculum” (as proclaimed by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Kurikulum Merdeka Berbagi) since

2012, Jungle School has indeed learned to be independent in all things but with educated and responsible freedom.

This unique Jungle School approach to education goes beyond traditional academic achievements and encourages students to engage with the content they are learning in a more meaningful way. Although the experience here differs from that of the formal school system, the benefits of this educational praxis are immeasurable. Every day, kids not just rooting to the nature, but truly they learn in, by, from, within the nature of Jungle School. At the end of each month, students produce a school project that requires them create things from what they find at school. The make school project so the nature talk to them, to retell their own experiences with the school learning content. Dressed up in costumes resembling their chosen theme, they present their project to the class under the guidance of two classroom teachers and engage in interactive dialogue.

My point by narrating a new life experience with dozens of Jungle School children from various continents, such as Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Australia as Jungle School students, there is a natural open space for the availability of practices of a unique perspective on everyday practices in education and religion. How and where kids learn, they will never destroy it, the will work so hard to have it longer as long as their life spam by taking care as well as they can.

Through their experiences, we can learn that God is the creator of the universe, and that humans, including children, have a collective responsibility to protect the earth. Yes iti is, God created the earth, but for some exactly reason kids are able to keep it green. Kids are the keeper. We can also learn from their experiences to understand the environmental theology of urban communities in educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

By highlighting the experiences of children, as much as we want, truly we also can gain a unique perspective on everyday practices in education and religion. Through their experiences, we can learn that God is the creator of the universe, and that humans, including children, have a collective responsibility to protect the earth. Through an in-depth exploration of the experiences of students at the Jungle School,

this article sheds light on how these experiences align with the urban school, which is grounded in the realities of Indonesia. Drawing insights from these experiences, it becomes apparent the awareness and understanding since the kids life. We can also learn from their experiences to understand the environmental theology of urban communities, which is not yet a core part of studies in Religious Higher Education in Indonesia. This article provides an opportunity for us to gain a better understanding of the importance of including young children in discussions about education and religion, and to learn from their experiences to create a better future for all human and the earth it self.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, without any financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the work reported in this paper.

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