

THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN VALUES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN DEVELOPING STUDENT CHARACTER IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Yasozatulo Larosa

STT Lintas Budaya Budaya Batam, Indonesia

Email: larosasip@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The digital era brings significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. Christian schools are faced with the challenge of integrating Christian values in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum amid the onslaught of digital technology. This study aims to analyze the integration of Christian values in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Christian schools in developing student character in the era of digital technology. This research uses qualitative research methods. The data collection technique in this study is a literature study. The data that has been collected is then analyzed in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The results showed that Christian values that can be taught to children at school through the Merdeka Curriculum include love, patience, tolerance, empathy and sympathy, honesty, humility, loyalty, and responsibility. The implementation of these values in Christian schools through the Merdeka Curriculum can produce graduates with strong character and ready to face challenges in the era of digital technology. These Christian values help students build a strong and firm faith, so that they are able to face the various temptations and challenges presented by digital technology.

KEYWORDS Christian Values, Independent Curriculum, Character, Digital Technology



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INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. Digital technology in education has changed the way teachers teach and students learn. Traditional learning methods that focus on face-to-face meetings and textbooks are now increasingly complemented by digital tools such as computers, tablets and the internet. Technology allows faster and wider access to information, and provides various interactive online learning platforms. Teachers

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and students can communicate and collaborate through virtual platforms, facilitating more flexible and personalized learning.

In the age of technology students are faced with a variety of new challenges that require a value-based approach to address. For example, fake news, cyberbullying and online fraud are real threats that test students' integrity and morality every day. In an effort to face these challenges, the application of Christian values becomes very relevant. Christian values, Galatians 5: 22-23 Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control, are values absorbed from the Bible or the Word of God (Krobo, 2021).

Christian schools are faced with the challenge of integrating Christian values in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum amid the onslaught of digital technology. The Merdeka Curriculum, which is a development of the Emergency Curriculum, is the latest innovation in education that is being socialized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbudristek). Although it is not yet an official national curriculum, it has been adopted by around 300,000 schools across Indonesia. Kemdikbudristek projects that Merdeka Curriculum will become the national curriculum in 2024, marking a major change in Indonesia's education system.

Previous research by (Samaloisa & Bilo, 2024) showed that the integration of digital technology in Christian learning can bring significant benefits in increasing students' learning motivation. The use of engaging and interactive digital tools and applications helps to create a more interesting and relevant learning experience for students. However, challenges such as technology accessibility and teacher readiness in utilizing digital technology also need to be considered.

Another study by (Waruwu & Sibarani, 2023) showed that the vision and mission of Christian religious education teachers emphasize the recognition of the divinity of God, love as the main principle, the integration of faith and science, the formation of Christian character, and the spiritual dimension of education. In implementing their vision and mission, Christian religious education teachers can use content selection that supports Christian values, integrated teaching strategies and relevant assessments. In this way, they can create learning experiences that reflect their vision and mission and help students develop strong Christian character.

This research enriches the theory on the integration of religious values in the school curriculum, showing how Christian values can be aligned with the objectives of Merdeka Curriculum. The results of this study can be the basis for the development of new theories on the use of digital technology in character education, providing a new perspective on how technology can be used to strengthen moral and ethical values among students. This research aims to analyze the integration of Christian values in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Christian schools in developing student character in the era of digital technology.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods. Qualitative method is an approach that focuses on in-depth observation, so that its application in research can produce a more comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon (Amane et al., 2023).

The data collection technique in this research is a literature study. The data that has been collected is then analyzed through three stages. First, data reduction involves the process of simplifying, sorting, and focusing raw data to make it easier to understand and process. Second, data presentation, where the data that has been reduced is organized systematically. The last stage is conclusion drawing, which is the process of analyzing the data that has been presented to identify patterns, relationships, and key findings that support the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Every life needs values in every behavior and attitude, including every individual, group, and society must have values in their faith. In Christianity, this is in accordance with the words in Proverbs 22:6 which reads, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and in his old age he will not depart from it”. The verse emphasizes that giving the right education and guidance to children from an early age, and when they are guided and taught good values and the right path from childhood, these values will be deeply embedded in them. Therefore, faith in Jesus must be a faith that is truly alive and manifested in daily actions and attitudes. One way to achieve this is by applying Christian values in life.

Christian values are moral principles found in the Bible, and these include teachings that Jesus Christ taught both directly and through His life examples. More than just teaching them, Jesus also applied them in His daily life, providing concrete examples of how they should be practiced (Saragih et al., 2023). Based on this, Christian values are not only theoretical, but also practical and living. When someone has a strong faith, these Christian values will be reflected in their attitudes and actions in their daily lives.

The importance of Christian values for students is reflected in the focus of Christian values on children's character building. The aim is to shape students to have an attitude of love, do good deeds, form correct perceptions, develop positive attitudes, strengthen beliefs, take appropriate actions, make wise decisions, promote social harmony, and encourage civilized life (Krobo, 2021). The importance of these values encourages schools to strive to convey and apply these values in teaching and learning organized in Christian religious education subjects.

Christian religious education plays an important role in guiding learners' character and helping them develop good self-control. The belief that God is the source of knowledge and truth lays the foundation for a view of the world and life. Teaching Christianity helps learners learn moral and ethical values such as compassion, honesty, humility and forgiveness. Furthermore, Christian religious education helps learners understand the importance of establishing good relationships, both with fellow humans and with God (Waruwu & Waruwu, 2023). All of these values are very relevant in shaping students' character and morals, especially in the midst of the challenges of the digital technology era that the world is facing today.

The era of digital technology is an age in which information technology is dominantly used to carry out various activities, with an emphasis on the use of computers and sophisticated automated systems. The use of computing systems that operate automatically and sophisticatedly with formats that can be accessed by

computers (Danuri, 2019). Basically, digital technology is a very fast calculation system that processes information in numerical form. The development of this technology brings changes in terms of the quality and efficiency of the data capacity generated and transmitted. For example, images become clearer due to better quality, data capacity becomes more efficient, and the delivery process becomes faster.

Digital technologies provide the means and infrastructure that support various practices and interactions, and influence human identities, bodies, social relationships, artistic practices and environments. They play a key role in shaping human self-concepts, social relationships, existence and interactions with non-human elements such as space and time. In addition, digital technology has also become an integral part of modern social networks and social institutions such as families, workplaces, education systems, health care, mass media, and the economy (Afrizal et al., 2020). This indicates that the presence of digital technology is able to bring significant changes to various aspects of human life.

The use of digital technology can have a positive impact especially in children's development. First, it provides learning facilities through the process of planning, developing, utilizing, managing, and evaluating learning resources. Second, technology helps in solving learning problems that are analyzed thoroughly by integrating various disciplines. Third, technology makes work more effective and efficient. Fourth, technology provides alternative solutions to the performance problems of educational organizations by using performance and instructional approaches. Finally, technology is able to create new innovations in education and teaching to solve various existing problems (Nurillahwaty, 2022).

On the other hand, the development of digital technology also brings negative impacts, especially for the development of children. In (Hendriani, 2017), it is mentioned that children become more vulnerable to inappropriate content, such as pornography and violence, which can affect their psychological and behavioral development. In addition, various social media platforms often present examples of thinking and responding to situations in a reactive and emotional way, which is a new threat to child development. The spread of intolerant messages also tends to increase on social media. Outside of the internet, television also has a role in showing content that is not always positive, which can form negative behavior patterns in children who are exposed to it continuously. All these effects demand attention and action to protect and guide children in this digital era, especially guidance in religious education at school.

Changes brought about by increasingly sophisticated technological advances challenge Christian religious education. The cultivation of Christian values through Christian religious education in the technological era faces a decline, the reason being that human relationships tend to be replaced by the presence of gadgets, such as mobile phones in the network (Tafonao et al., 2022). In addition, there are still problems with the behavior of students or learners who violate good moral values, which emphasizes the need for serious attention from parents and teachers to character building. These conditions indicate that Christian education needs to adapt to remain relevant and meet the needs of generations living amidst the development of digital technology (Mendrofa & Hapsarini, 2023).

The challenges faced show the need for the formation and development of student character by integrating Christian values in schools, one of which is through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum framework that gives schools the freedom to design the curriculum according to local needs and student characteristics. This approach aims to strengthen learning based on skills, creativity, and diversity, so that students can develop holistically according to their individual potential (Samaloisa & Bilo, 2024).

Based on history, the education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone significant development since 1947, starting with the 1947 Rentjana Pembelajaran Curriculum and continuing to develop until it reached the current Merdeka Curriculum. Along the way, the education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone changes ten times, namely in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, 2013, and 2022. The latest development, the Merdeka Curriculum, is principled on fully student-centered learning, by applying the concept of Merdeka Belajar (Cholilah et al., 2023). This concept emphasizes students to choose subjects that interest them. The essence of Merdeka Curriculum is education based on nature and the development of the times, where each student has unique talents and interests.

The Merdeka Curriculum, also known as the Prototype Curriculum, is a curriculum that is more flexible than the previous curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes essential material, as well as the development of student character and competencies. One of the main features of the Merdeka Curriculum is the application of more interactive and collaborative learning methods (Lestari et al., 2023). The flexibility of this curriculum helps teachers, students, and schools have greater freedom in carrying out learning activities. This means that all parties involved in the education process can adjust learning methods and materials according to their respective needs and potential, so that it is expected to increase the effectiveness and quality of education.

Christian Religious Education (PAK) implemented within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum has 4 significant impacts on the character development of students. First, the Merdeka Curriculum encourages PAK to be better integrated into the core curriculum. As a subject that has a key role in shaping students' character, PAK becomes an integral part of the curriculum that emphasizes the development of students' independence. As a result, students can understand Christian religious values better, helping them to overcome life's challenges (Waruwu & Waruwu, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages more creative and innovative learning, providing opportunities for PAK teachers to apply more interesting and interactive learning methods. This approach can increase students' motivation to be active and creative in the learning process, which in turn can improve students' ability to solve problems, think critically, and make smarter decisions. Third, Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to be more independent and responsible in learning. Learning that is more contextualized and tailored to students' needs allows them to manage their own learning time. Thus, this can help students develop independence and learn independently, preparing students for future challenges.

Merdeka curriculum provides flexibility to PAK teachers in local curriculum development. Teachers can adapt their curriculum to the needs of students and the environment. This makes the PAK curriculum more relevant and effective in helping students develop independence and strong character. Based on these results, it means that Merdeka Curriculum has a positive influence on Christian religious education, which shows that this curriculum can be utilized effectively. There are various Christian values that can be taught to children at school through the Merdeka Curriculum. According to (Tafonao et al., 2022), these Christian values include:

1. Love
The value of love means giving love to others regardless of differences in social status, ethnicity, skin color, culture, or religion (Luke 10:25-37). It includes fair, non-discriminatory behavior, and avoiding harsh words or bullying. Teaching the value of love means fostering an attitude of respect and care for all people, and promoting justice and equality in daily interactions.
2. Patience
Described as not complaining (Philippians 2:14), it means facing every process and development with patience, keeping trying, persevering, and being optimistic. This behavior encourages students not to give up easily, to keep trying diligently, and to always maintain a positive spirit despite challenges. Patience also involves the ability to wait and accept results that may not be immediately apparent, and to keep trying without complaint.
3. Tolerance
Tolerance is defined as respecting the beliefs and faith of others, as well as respecting and appreciating one's elders. Tolerance also means accepting all differences, both differences of opinion and differences in social status (Luke 9:51-56). Teaching tolerance in schools helps students to understand and appreciate diversity, whether in terms of views, cultures or social backgrounds, and develop a respectful attitude towards all people regardless of differences.
4. Empathy and sympathy
The value of empathy and sympathy is understanding the situation and conditions of others, recognizing and meeting their needs, and being able to build good communication. This social attitude involves openness and sensitivity to others. An attitude of empathy and sympathy in school helps students to become more sensitive to the feelings and situations of others and promotes more harmonious and respectful relationships within their community.
5. Honesty
Honesty means admitting mistakes (Psalm 38:18; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9), not spreading false information or hoaxes, being consistent between words and deeds, and returning items that do not belong to them. Honesty means adhering to truth and integrity in all situations. The value of honesty in school helps students to understand the importance of transparency,

responsibility and integrity, which are the foundation for building trust and credibility in their relationships with others.

6. Humble

Always strive to go first in giving respect to others (Romans 12:10), not be arrogant (1 Corinthians 13:4; Romans 11:20), not be selfish, and not be introverted. Humility taught to students can help students develop an attitude of respect for others, humble themselves in all things, and prioritize the interests of others over themselves.

7. Loyalty

Diligent and persevering, obedient to every rule or order, not easily discouraged, focused on goals and principles, and not biased (James 1:8). The value of loyalty taught at school helps students to understand the importance of consistency and commitment in everything they do, both in academics and in daily life. M

8. Responsibility

Not blaming others for one's own mistakes, completing every job and task on time, and being able to manage time well (independent). Learning responsibility means helping students to understand the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions, completing tasks with discipline, and managing time effectively to achieve their goals.

Christian schools can apply these Christian values, in teaching through an independent curriculum, so as to produce graduates who have strong character and are ready to face challenges in the era of digital technology (Halawa & Tapilaha, 2024). These Christian values help students build a strong and firm faith, so that they are able to face the various temptations and challenges presented by digital technology. Students who have a strong faith can maintain their integrity and morality in an ever-changing world.

In addition, education based on Christian values also develops critical and creative thinking skills. Relevant to digital technology that presents a lot of information and diverse content, and students need to have the ability to analyze the information critically and utilize technology positively and innovatively (Rokhman & Pristiwati, 2023). Critical thinking skills enable students to evaluate information objectively, while creative thinking skills encourage students to find new solutions and be wise in utilizing technology.

Furthermore, the application of Christian values also emphasizes the importance of being ethical and responsible in the use of digital technology. Students are taught to understand and comply with applicable norms and rules, avoid negative behaviors such as cyberbullying, and use technology wisely and responsibly (Petrus et al., 2022). This ethical attitude ensures that students can use technology for good purposes and benefit themselves and society.

Finally, good communication skills are also an important aspect that is developed through Christian values. Digital technology opens up opportunities for global communication, making it easy to interact with people from different parts of the world. Students who are educated with Christian values have good communication skills, both orally and in writing (Bessie et al., 2023). This ability is an important asset to build positive and effective relationships on various digital

platforms. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the integration of Christian values in the implementation of an independent curriculum in Christian schools is able to develop students' character, which is very necessary to face the challenges arising from technological advances in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

Christian values that can be taught to children at school through the Merdeka Curriculum include love, patience, tolerance, empathy and sympathy, honesty, humility, loyalty, and responsibility. The implementation of these values in Christian schools through the Merdeka Curriculum can produce graduates with strong character and ready to face challenges in the era of digital technology. These Christian values help students build a strong and firm faith, so that they are able to face the various temptations and challenges presented by digital technology. With a strong faith, students can maintain their integrity and morality in an ever-changing world.

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