



Christian Education in the Era of Disruption

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Abstract. This paper talks about how Christian Education ministry in Indonesia has to continue its calling and tasks in the era of disruption, especially in times where the church and society facing the challenge of pandemic COVID 19. The thought is built up from literature exploration. It is held that disruption facing Christian education has been historical, and Christian educator today may learn from the past ideas and practices. Six brief responses are then proposed.

Keywords: Christian education, Indonesia, disruption, responses

1 Introduction

The Scripture provides information that Christian Education (CE) from the early church faces numerous challenges in their contexts in equipping the people of God growing in the knowledge of the Triune God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and for life transformation. Despite the challenges and pressures from people outside the church, Christian leaders in the past encourage believers to believe in, and follow Christ, and practice discipleship (Matt. 28:19-20)[1] [2], to enhance the teaching of faith in Christ so that congregation become mature spiritually (Eph. 4:11-16)[3], and to be a community with character transformation through worshipping the Lord and learning from one another (Col. 3:15-17) [4], [5].

In the first five centuries, church fathers creatively responded to the rejection of Judaism, the Roman political pressures, and the life values and worldview of Hellenism, in order to lead congregations knowing the word of God and live intimately with Jesus Christ, the savior and Lord. They wrote books to be curriculum materials for church leaders in teaching their congregations [6]–[8]. History of Christian education also shows us that Christian educators need to develop relevant curriculum, and contextual teaching and learning activities for live transformation of learners.

This paper explains in what ways Christian education ministry in the church and school contexts of Indonesia, need to be creative in providing response to the disruptive situation because of the global information technology advancement, and the challenges of the pandemic COVID-19. In order to propose the idea, the writer briefly describes the ministry of Christian education in Indonesia. Then, the issue of disruption and learning will be touched. Finally, some thought on ways to respond will be pointed out.

2 Christian Education in Indonesia

Christian education in Indonesia is mostly understood as the activities of teaching and learning of Christian faith in school contexts, from primary to secondary and tertiary levels. It has become part of the curriculum student learning or as compulsory subject [9]. Books are available to help teachers and students in their teaching and learning both in primary and secondary education, facilitated by the government and Christian publishers. Even textbooks on learning Christian Faith in higher education can be found by students and lecturers [10], [11].

Changes of national education policies bring impact on the development of curriculum and the learning of religion in schools and universities. The realities then affect curriculum and learning strategies of Christian faith. Since 2013, the emphasis of Christian religious education has been the learning of faith, values and character development. It is contradictory to the emphasis of teaching of Christian doctrines in the previous years, usually called as Curriculum of Christian Religious Education 1993/1994. The change happens in order to response the government emphasis on the compulsory of values and character education in schools, colleges and university [12], [13].

The curriculum and learning of Christian Faith in school context has challenged churches and denominations to be more creative and relevant. Christian education in the church in many denomination and local churches put emphasis on teaching Christian faith, the Bible and doctrine, to children and teenagers through Sunday Schools activities. Curriculum and contents of teachings are church or denomination based. Catechism, or the learning of Christian doctrines, is usually designed for young people for their faith confirmation in Protestant denomination, or for their baptism in Pentecostal and Charismatic communities.

In facing the challenges religious group majority, some churches and denominations are able and willing to facilitate the learning of Christian Faith for children and teenagers who study in public schools. Some others do not have competent church ministers that will help students. Public schools that do not provide teachers of Christian Faith, by enlarge encourage Christian students to learn from their pastors or leaders, and so can get grade for their academic report. Although the national constitution and educational laws point out the practice of tolerance, but it is sad to observe that students in public schools often find it difficult to have Christian teacher that will facilitate their religious education classes. It is true then when Andar Ismail describes that intolerance is facing Christian community with soft and hard strategies[14].

It has become a great challenge for schools and churches too, because over the last two years changes in strategy and methods of teaching and learning of Christian faith have been forced by the pandemic of COVID-19 to take place through online. Christian families also suffer emotionally, socially and economically, even spiritually, along with wider community in the country. Interpersonal relationships that are important for Indonesian people has changed into impersonal or virtual interaction in teaching and learning. Church members and leaders including teachers and pastors

struggle to adjust to a new learning methods and strategies, and hence they in need of support and training.

3 Disruptive Era and Training

We live in disruption era, which is characterized by fast changes and innovations, progressed by advancement information technology. People create new strategies, methods and techniques in accomplishing their tasks and responsibilities, in order to be excelled from their partners or competitors [15]–[17].

Kasali holds that disruption is a state of fundamental change, mainly caused by the evolution of information technology that changes the order of life, the business world and education. Disruption is the presence of new, invisible opponents. Many large companies that once had names went bankrupt because they were challenged by new companies with “new management and disruptive mindsets” [16]. This era has 3 S characteristics, namely speed, surprise, and sudden shift [16]. Kasali emphasizes that millennials are those who want to create a better future, through cooperation and the use of technology, who will win the game or beat competitors or incumbents [16].

Furthermore, for Kasali, disruption is not rightly seen as an obstacle or threat to progress but rather as an opportunity [16]. Company leaders must invite their communities to make changes by developing agility by understanding right, then working together and daring to make the right decisions. The leader must not be like a lion who bleats, but does not dare to execute (act) for the sake of progress [16]. Conversely, leaders who have agility (agility) assertive, according to Kasali have such characteristics as self-discipline, dare to take risks (risk taker), play to win (play to win), simplify choices (power of simplicity), growth mindset, assertive communication, broad perspective and wisdom, critical thinking (critical thinking) and creative thinking [16].

Today we live in Era 4.0/5.0 where people are dependent on internet of things (IoT), big data, and artificial intelligence (AI). After the COVID-19 people globally are more used to the use of artificial intelligence in everyday lives. Many learning resources are now available in e-books or other virtual forms. Hence, according to Baswany the training of new generation to be leaders for the future cannot be maintain through traditional approach [18]. Digital generation need to be involved in leadership, and administration of any organization and profession; this new generation demands openness and trust from their leaders.

Both Kasali and Baswany provides an idea that in teaching and training new generation in church and school contexts, new approaches that are hospitable towards new information technology advancement, along with the facilitation of critical and creative thinking, become a necessity to be considered by Christian educators and church ministers. It should be acknowledged that the realization may be so difficult because adult leaders are not used to the new technology of teaching and learning. However, incarnational life and ministerial principle as modeled by Christ the Master Teacher, can supply motivation for Christian teachers.

4 Some ways of responding

Learning from Christian educators in the past, today we need to develop positive, critical, creative, constructive and dynamic attitudes in facilitating the learning of Christian faith in family, church, and school settings. Here are some suggestions that be related to the present disruption time.

First, in response to the COVID-19 problems, Christian faith learning both in school and church settings need to provide understanding of God's will and providence, and encouragement for learners and congregations for wise living and perseverance [19]. Wise living is related to the way they should respond to the government health protocols. They must learn to be good citizens as taught by the Bible (Titus 2:14; 3:1,8). Then, as also taught by the Scripture, perseverance is needed in times of difficulties and crises (1 Cor 13:10; Jas 1:2-8; 5:7-12; Rom 5:1-5). Hence, content of teachings in Christian religious education has to be relevant to the daily life of learners.

Second, teacher training is needed so that teachers develop healthy spirituality and character amid disruption caused by COVID19, competence in using information technology in order to facilitate creative learning of the word of God that will transform the life of students. As suggested by Paul in the past (1 Titus 4:11-16; Titus 2:6-7), the teaching of faith through innovative instruction integrated with excellent life example is needed by students today.

Third, students need to learn not only faith as knowledge but also faith as ethics, moral, and character especially related to digital literacy. Student needs help from their teachers how to wisely use digital technology for their everyday life as to bring glory to the Lord not to the fulfillment of fleshly desires. As Andar Ismail recently emphasizes in one of his contents of teaching for adults, topics and discussions about wise moral decisions are crucial today[14]. Paul asserts that necessity for the church in Thessalonica when he talks about the vitality of discerning spirit (1 Th 5:19-22).

Fourth, learning from digital religion and digital ecclesiology, curriculum and learning of Christian faith need to be facilitated by appropriate use of digital technology that are familiar with students, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Video Snack, and podcast with short narratives. The growing of instruments for learning and teaching Christian faith as we can see today, has been significantly increase [20].

Fifth, strategies of contextual and student active learning, dialogical and reflective learning, problem based and case study learning, are all need to be used in faith learning today. Parents at home, teachers of Christian faith in schools and higher education settings, are challenged to be adjustive to the disruptive learning and teaching systems. The mission of the church and parachurch institutions including Christian higher theological institutions, then is substantial in helping both parents and teachers [21].

Finally, the teaching and learning of Christian faith must also balance the learning of faith through the Scriptures as to form knowledge and understanding, with the learning of faith through personal and communal experience, and through reflections from life issues or life crises in context. Moreover, ethical issues because of the

wrong use of information technology for everyday life, need to be critically and contextually examined from the ethical teaching of the Bible, particularly from the gospels of Jesus Christ [22], [23]. It is important because in waiting for the end of time, as the apostle Peter has asserted, Christians should make attempts to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Ptr 3:18) [24], [25].

5 Conclusion

Christian educators, by modeling the examples of Jesus the Master Teacher and teachers in the past, need to develop creativity in facilitating the learning of faith in disruptive era today. He also faced disruption caused by variable pressures as he trained his disciples and preached the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Disruptive era resulted by the advancing growth of information technology open ways to unexpected opportunity, threads and challenges to the learning of Christian faith in Indonesia. The Lord Jesus, The Master Teacher, as he has promised, will be with Christian educators until the end of time (Mt 28:19-20; Heb 13:7-8). We can see the reality is being expressed by the creativity of Christian educators in responding to the challenges and opportunities of their seasons. Hence, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Teacher of believers (Jn 14:26; 15:26-27), we can develop transformative teaching and learning in equipping students to become light and salt of the world (Mt 5:13-16) in the midst of disruption caused by COVID-19 and advancement of information technology.

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