



A Biblical Principle Based Model of Christian Education Management in the Church Context in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has reshaped the paradigm of educational management, including within the context of the church. However, the implementation of Christian education management in churches continues to face challenges in integrating biblical principles with the demands of digitalization. This study aims to formulate a Christian education management model that integrates biblical principles with digital technology within the context of church ministry. The research adopts a qualitative approach using a literature review method, analyzing theological, educational management, and digital technology literature published between 2020 and 2024. The study results in a Christian education management model comprising five key dimensions: (1) an organization grounded in biblical principles that integrates design, leadership, and administrative aspects; (2) an adaptive organizational structure tailored to church size and age-group segmentation; (3) a learning approach relevant to the digital cultural context; (4) the digitalization of management through virtual communities, digital learning platforms, and church information systems; and (5) continuous evaluation based on Christian values. The resulting model offers a comprehensive framework that preserves theological integrity while leveraging digital technology to enhance the effectiveness of Christian education within the church.

Keywords: christian education management; biblical principles; church digitalization; digital transformation; technology-based education

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era has transformed various aspects of human life, including educational paradigms and the management of religious organizations. In the context of the church, this transformation presents both challenges and opportunities for the effective administration of Christian education (Heryanto et al., 2024). As an informal educational institution, the church is expected to adopt managerial approaches that are not only responsive to technological changes but also firmly rooted in biblical principles as its theological foundation.

Previous studies have shown that most churches lack a structured education management system grounded in strong biblical principles (Sirait, 2024). This situation is exacerbated by the low level of digital technology

adaptation in church education ministries, despite the fact that the younger Christian generation tends to be more responsive to technology-based learning. Anjani and Irwansyah (2020) emphasize that technology not only affects technical aspects but also influences culture and organizational structures, including within the context of church ministry. Based on the literature review, several fundamental issues in the management of Christian education within churches have been identified:

1. Limited Managerial Models: Most churches lack a systematic and biblically integrated education management model (Sirait, 2024).
2. Digital Gap: There is a significant gap between the digital learning preferences of younger generations and the conventional approaches still prevalent in church ministries.
3. Theological-Technical Integration: There is a lack of frameworks capable of integrating theological values with digital technology without compromising the essence of spirituality.

This study aims to:

1. Analyze biblical principles relevant to the management of Christian education.
2. Identify the challenges and opportunities of digitalization in church education.
3. Formulate a Christian education management model that integrates biblical principles with digital technology.
4. Develop an implementation framework for an adaptive and contextualized management model.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Christian education management studies and practically to churches in optimizing their educational ministries in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review method. This approach was chosen to conduct an in-depth analysis of both theoretical and practical concepts related to Christian education management in the context of digitalization. Primary data is derived from biblical literature, particularly texts related to principles of organization, leadership, and education. Secondary data includes scholarly journals, books, and academic publications from the period 2020–2024 that discuss educational management, digital technology in the church, and biblical principles in organizational management. The data analysis was carried out through the following stages:

1. Content Analysis: Identifying biblical principles relevant to education management.
2. Comparative Analysis: Comparing various education management models within the church context.
3. Theoretical Synthesis: Integrating findings to formulate a comprehensive management model.
4. Conceptual Validation: Testing the consistency of the model with both theological and practical principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Christian Education Management

Management is closely related to organization before undertaking something so that during implementation, everything does not run chaotically. Measuring the implementation of education in schools will appear easier and more measurable in terms of success, compared to measuring the level of success in implementing Christian education in the Church. However, this does not mean that the success of Christian education in the church cannot be measured at all.

Management is generally often defined as the art and process of mobilizing resources to achieve goals. Management is a combination of science and art because it involves a dynamic process that integrates scientific approaches with practical skills and creativity. Although based on theories and facts that can be proven, management also requires intuitive and imaginative abilities, similar to an artist in creating works. Therefore, success in management depends not only on theory, but also on individual expertise in executing tasks effectively and adaptively (Gaol, 2023).

Management is the effective use of human and non-human resources as well as other material resources in order to achieve predetermined goals. Management as a social process places its emphasis on the interaction of people, both those within and outside formal institutions, or those above and below one's operational position. Improving the quality of education is not a light task, because it is not only related to technical problems, but encompasses various complicated and complex issues, thus requiring better educational management. Weak educational management also has an impact on the quality of Christian Education implementation itself. Furthermore, the state of educational management in churches still has many deficiencies. Even among existing churches, many do not have organizational patterns that can regulate the implementation of Christian Education in the Church.

Understanding Christian Education Management

Educational management in general means management applied in educational development (Muhaimin, 2015). Based on the perspective of Imron, et al., specifically Christian education management is the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating all educational resources based on Christian faith values, with the aim of organizing effective, efficient, and meaningful education in forming Christian character. This management encompasses the art and science of managing Christian education, both in formal educational institutions and in ecclesiastical contexts, to build congregations as true disciples of Christ, as reflected in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) (Widjaja et al., 2020). In this context, Christian education leaders also serve as shepherds, teachers, and spiritual managers, who guide congregations and students toward faith growth and obedience to God (Eph. 4:11).

Considering that the concept of educational management is a field of study based on effectiveness and efficiency in managing various educational resources to achieve predetermined educational goals (Gaol, 2023), Christian education management actually differs only in the aspect of emphasis. Christian education management is a field of study that focuses on educational practice with the implementation of Christian values in managing Christian Education in schools and churches. Meanwhile, the main principles of educational management are still adopted in its practice. Therefore, every process of Christian education management cannot be separated from various activities and various components of Christian education.

To ensure the success of an endeavor, management must be implemented based on general management principles or what is better known as management principles. Similarly, the implementation of Christian Religious education needs to apply management principles and base them on the truth written in the Bible.

Objectives of Christian Education Management Implementation

The purpose of Christian education management is to provide academically quality education that is strongly rooted in Christian values (Widjaja et al., 2020). First and foremost, Christian education management aims to improve the quality of educational institutions through professional, directed, and responsible management, in harmony with the Christian faith vision that forms the foundation of its existence. Christian education does not only aim to educate, but also to form Christian individuals who live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, particularly in terms of love, obedience, and real-life witness in society.

Furthermore, Christian education management is directed toward developing students' potential holistically—encompassing spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional aspects—by instilling Biblical values throughout the entire learning process. The success of educational management is also measured by its ability to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, achieved through continuous evaluation, development of adaptive programs, and willingness to follow the changes of time without losing faith identity.

Moreover, Christian education management plays a role in supporting pastoral ministry in the church by providing education that is relevant, contextual, and rooted in God's word. In this context, Christian education becomes a strategic means to prepare congregations to become witnesses of Christ in personal, family, and broader community life. Thus, Christian education management is not merely an administrative activity, but a transformative mission service in building the body of Christ as a whole.

The Concept of Christian Education Management in the Church

Understanding of educational management continues to develop and is inseparable from various debates. However, this development actually enriches our understanding, particularly in the context of Christian education in the church. In its ministry, the church not only delivers God's word, but also has responsibility in educating congregations in a structured and directed manner. Therefore, Christian education management becomes very important so that educational ministry can run orderly, planned, and produce real spiritual growth.

Lumban Gaol explains that there are four main concepts that form the basis for understanding Christian education management, namely: (1) as an applied science field, (2) related to resource management, (3) implemented based on efficiency and effectiveness principles, and (4) directed toward achieving educational goals (Gaol, 2020). Based on these four concepts, Christian education in churches must apply management concepts that can be explained as follows:

First, Christian education management in the church can be understood as the application of basic management principles such as planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation—into congregational education ministry. This means the church needs to arrange spiritual education programs systematically and run them with a responsible approach. Although spiritual in nature, educational ministry still requires serious management based on managerial principles.

Second, Christian education management encompasses the management of all resources available within the church. This includes teachers (Sunday school teachers, youth mentors, small group leaders), teaching aids (Bibles, digital media, modules), and other supporting facilities. All of these need to be well coordinated so that the entire teaching and learning process in the church can run effectively and support congregational faith growth.

Third, in carrying out Christian education ministry, the church needs to pay attention to efficiency and effectiveness principles. Efficiency means the church uses available resources wisely and not wastefully, while effectiveness concerns the extent to which congregational spiritual goals are achieved through the education program. Without mature planning and evaluation, ministry can become mere routine without producing genuine life transformation.

Fourth, all activities in Christian education management in the church must be directed toward achieving spiritual education goals, namely faith growth, spiritual maturity, and congregational ability to serve. This goal becomes a compass for all educational activities in the church. If there is no clear direction, then educational management will lose focus and will not significantly impact congregational spiritual life.

Models of Educational Management in the Church

Christian education in the church is an inseparable part of the church's calling to educate and disciple God's people in the light of the Word. Amid modern era challenges, the church is required not only to deliver teaching verbally, but also to have an educational management system that is structured, relevant, and contextual. Therefore, Christian education in the church cannot be carried out carelessly, but must be based on strong Biblical principles, well organized, and managed with efficient and visionary management.

1. Biblical Principles of Organization

A fundamental question in applying business management principles to the church is whether this is a Biblical action? Conversely, can Biblical principles be applied in the business management area? Both of these questions should reasonably be brought together at one point where Biblical principles must remain as the main foundation in implementing educational management. Some scriptural principles that can be studied include (Bechtel, 2012:237):

Design. No one goes to sleep at night worrying about whether the sun will rise in the east the next morning. Similarly, it would be very difficult to explain that tomorrow the sun will rise in the north. Why? Because God has arranged the entire universe with extraordinary order. Even science is based on the order that God has created. Thus, order is God's work that we should apply in every aspect of life.

Organization. From the beginning, God can see the end. If He wants to lead His people to the Promised Land, He knows what must be done to organize His plan; everything is in His mind. He chose Moses to implement or organize that plan. The book of Exodus contains so many leadership and management principles under Moses' leadership. Exodus 18:13-24 is one of the main examples of delegation principles, when Moses' father-in-law Jethro advised him about ways to reduce his workload.

Administration. Acts 6:1-8 records administration that occurred as a response to a need, namely the fact that certain widows were not receiving their daily food rations. This quite old principle in the early church has proven to be implemented both in church and secular life regarding the importance of task division (job description).

If so, does the church also need to be organized like a business? The answer is Yes, considering that the church is an organization, just like government, family, institutions. However, it should be remembered that the church is not a business that organizes everything for profit. The church is an institution belonging to Christ, where Jesus is the Head of the Church and we, the congregation, are members of His spiritual body. Kingdom of God principles need to exist in the church which includes requirements, firmness, reproof, duties, responsibilities, so that the church has standards that are different from business.

2. Biblical Organization

The church is both an organization and an organism. It is called an organization because it has structure, design, and purpose. An organization is designed to work toward a common end. Meanwhile, an organism means life and ordered living. A church or Christian school with good organization will not run effectively if it lacks life. Conversely, a church or school that is alive and has good work spirit will experience chaos if it is not organized and difficult to manage. Therefore, organization is essential for planning effectiveness and success in implementing every established goal. This structure will determine how people can work together in their relationships to achieve these goals effectively and efficiently. It should be remembered that administration can be simply defined as making "things or matters accomplished by people," so management deals with how to properly place people in positions within an

organizational structure. The church as an organism means that within it are people who work according to plans and within structures according to their job descriptions, and who have servant hearts to work together effectively.

Most Christians learn their views about organization and administration from secular sources, and often this forms a philosophy that is contrary to biblical principles. However, as Christian workers, we believe that God's Word is the source that gives us understanding in every part of our lives, including how to run a church.

Christ is the most successful manager in the history of humanity. Through his leadership of only 3.5 years, he was able to create 12 apostles and 70 disciples who could effectively change the world, and present the largest organization consisting of 1.5 billion followers today; international in scale and having branches in 223 countries.

Christian education in the church will succeed effectively if it builds a biblical organization and runs that organization with biblical administration. Every organizational structure is designed and operated in biblical ways. The structure must include balance between organization and administration, agreement on common goals, and good communication among its members. By remembering these principles, we can shift our focus to the structures themselves.

3. Relevant Christian Education

Christian Religious Education is being implemented in the midst of changing times, marked by advances in technology, information, and the acceleration of digital media. A true church is one that has a forward-looking vision and always strives to meet the needs of the people around it, and these needs change over time Getz (in Bechtle, 2012:238) explains the balance between three lenses: Scripture, history, and contemporary culture. In building a ministry, it is recommended to first look through the lens of the Bible, which builds a solid biblical foundation for ministry. Second, looking through the lens of history will help develop a relevant ministry by learning from past events. Finally, we must look through the lens of culture to make organizational structures relevant in terms of effective ministry for the current generation.

Often churches only focus on the first two lenses, Scripture and History, and ignore change. Churches are not always at the forefront in terms of technology and innovation, although advances in this realm can be impressive. However, churches should be at the forefront in serving and meeting the genuine needs of people in relevant ministry. Any structure designed that meets the genuine needs of people can be assured to be good!

The organizational structures that exist in churches and schools need to be evaluated to see if they can still effectively accommodate and serve the people around them according to their needs. Don't be afraid that the structure has become old, as long as it can meet ministry needs; only necessary changes need to be made to increase its effectiveness.

4. Foundation for Organizational Structure Formation

Christian Education organizational structures in small churches usually involve few people and simpler organizational charts. Large churches typically have organizational structures with more detailed division of labor and involve more people. In small churches, the personnel involved are from among the congregation who serve voluntarily. For large churches, they usually have special personnel who handle Christian education matters, with professional staff serving full-time. For example, a church with 200 members can form a simple Christian education structure. In this chart, each division is led by someone who reports directly to the Christian Education Leader. The Christian Education Leader or usually the Christian education pastor is a graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Christian Religious Education from a Theological College. The Christian Education Leader is responsible for reviewing all

ministries, evaluating and coordinating plans from each program. Each program can be further divided depending on the size of the ministry.

For churches with 250-800 members, the chart remains the same, but leadership can be added at each level to reach a larger number of congregation members. For churches with large congregations, more detailed and broader organizational structures need to be formed to reach the ministry needs of the congregation.

The composition of organizational structure is formed based on needs and goals to be achieved. Generally, churches will have programs related to Christian Education. The following description will explain several important matters related to Christian education programs in churches.

1. Sunday School is a manifestation of Christian education, especially for children. Sunday School focuses on biblical knowledge. Sunday school activities have proven to be used as evangelism tools in much of church history.

Basically, Sunday School is not a program limited only to children, but for all ages. However, the face of Sunday school that exists in Indonesian churches today is more specifically for children's worship accompanied by Bible learning and evangelism activities carried out on Sundays, concurrent with worship. Where parents attend general worship while children participate in Bible learning activities. Nevertheless, many churches have realized the importance of Christian education for adults that cannot be held on Sundays. For this reason, churches create new programs and form new leadership specifically to handle adult education matters. The activities organized focus on Bible study and lessons relevant to adults.

2. Age Group Programs. God designed humans to need each other. This is the complete concept of the body of ministry found in the New Testament. People who fellowship in groups with similar interests and characteristics can learn from each other. For this reason, Christian Education generally occurs in age groups.

Age groups for children generally are as follows:

- Babies (birth – 2 years)
- Children ages 2 and 3 years
- Children ages 4 and 5 years
- Primary (Grades 1-2)
- Intermediate (Grades 3-4)
- Junior (Grades 5-6)

Teenage age groups (Grades 7-9) have more complex needs and need to be formed into separate age groups. Furthermore, youth (Grades 10-12) require special ministry and it is very important to form them into one learning group. More mature young adults, both those pursuing higher education and those already working, can be united in one learning group where members are those aged 18-35 years or more.

Equally important is the question of who serves them? Large churches with sufficient financial capacity can hire professional staff to serve full-time for each age group category. However, this is not a requirement. Churches can train and equip spiritually mature congregation members to be involved in this ministry. The principle that needs to be developed is that older people will teach those who are younger. In this way, each person will be trained in Christian education ministry.

It should be noted that teaching children (pedagogy) is different from teaching adult age groups (andragogy). Balance is needed when approaching different age groups. Christian educators should not be satisfied with excessive

emphasis on children's and youth ministry. This concept is strengthened by Scripture where we can see that both in the Old Testament and New Testament, the emphasis is indeed on adults.

3. Children's Worship. This activity provides children's worship that has worship value to God, like adult worship. Its main purpose is worship that has the same value as adults but is appropriate for children's age. In children's worship, appropriate liturgy is arranged and includes prayer, praise, and proclamation of the Word, activities, crafts, and other activities.
4. Vacation Bible School. This routine activity can be organized by churches to reach children during holidays. Through informal activities, children are given opportunities to learn the Bible in a more enjoyable atmosphere.
5. Camps and Retreats are activities conducted by withdrawing from all social media, internet, and daily activity distractions with the purpose of focusing on Bible learning. This activity enables a 24-hour discipleship pattern. All activities will be focused on spiritual matters, so that each participant will deepen and be able to meaningfully understand the truth of God's Word deeply and will impact restoration and personal transformation.

5. Implementation of Christian Education Management Digitalization in Churches

It is clear that digital transformation is not merely a choice, but becomes a necessity, especially in realizing quality Christian education management. Digital management in churches encompasses educational activities to improve services by strategically utilizing information and communication technology. Forms of Christian education management digitalization in churches can be implemented as follows: First, Virtual Community Management. Virtual faith communities present through digital technology have changed the way people live and give meaning to life. In the context of Christian Religious Education, social media, online forums, and educational applications open new opportunities for learning and spiritual growth, without limitations of place and time (Waruwu & Hulu, 2024).

Teachers and congregation members as students can connect through social media managed and organized by churches in the teaching-learning process. This community not only expands educational reach, but also encourages collaboration, reflection, and more personal and inclusive learning. Christian Religious Education teachers play important roles in directing wise technology use to continue supporting Christian values. Thus, virtual faith communities become strategic means for forming generations that are strong in faith and digitally capable. Through this innovative and adaptive approach, church leaders can create faith communities that remain relevant and effective in reaching congregations.

Second, learning development management. Digital technology plays a strategic role in developing Christian Religious Education learning in the disruption era. Its existence enables the birth of new approaches that are relevant, effective, and responsive to the dynamics of the times. Through utilization of e-learning platforms, mobile applications, learning videos, and other digital resources, the learning process becomes more flexible, interactive, and meaningful. Christian teachers and students are encouraged to create innovation, enrich learning experiences, and reach credible theological sources more broadly (Darti et al., 2023). Thus, digital technology is not only a supporting tool, but an integral part in contextual and missional Christian learning transformation.

Therefore, churches can implement adaptive digital learning models that emphasize the importance of flexible teaching-learning process design, responsive to individual needs, and based on student interaction data. By utilizing LMS features such as discussion forums, adaptive quizzes, and automatic assessment, educators can adjust teaching methods and materials based on interests, learning pace, and participant understanding.

Third, congregation information management systems. This model encompasses digitalization of all congregation data, from membership, service history, to participation in spiritual and educational activities. Systematically documented data can support decision-making processes by church pastors, accelerate information distribution, and become the basis for service evaluation. Information systems can be developed through simple web-based applications or integration with existing church administration platforms.

CONCLUSION

Christian education in the church must be conducted through structured, efficient management that is grounded in biblical principles. The church is a spiritual organization that requires clear order, organization, and administration in accordance with biblical principles such as the orderliness of God's creation, delegation of duties, and division of labor. Church organization must maintain balance between structure and spiritual life so that Christian education can operate effectively and efficiently. The organizational structure must be relevant to contemporary needs, integrating biblical, historical, and contemporary cultural perspectives. Christian education needs to adapt to technological developments and the needs of congregants from various age groups through systematic programs such as Sunday school, age-specific groups, children's worship, vacation Bible school, and spiritual camps. The digitalization of educational management in churches has become inevitable with the implementation of virtual communities, digital learning platforms, and integrated congregational information systems. This digital transformation strengthens the effectiveness of Christian education ministry through adaptive, interactive, and data-driven learning methods.

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