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Implementing Curriculum Adjustment for Christian Education and Theology Study Programs Based on *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*

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Abstract

In Indonesia, even though its demography is noted as the fourth largest population in the world, its significant number does not give a positive effect on graduates of Christian Institutions. It is so since Christian inhabitants in Indonesia are a minority while the institution run by these Christian and Theology Study Programs are abundant. It causes graduates from these institutions over the capacity for schools and churches can use. In order to increase the opportunity for taking jobs for graduates of Theological Institutions, there must be innovative ways taken. This research was conducted by qualitative method with phenomenological approach. The research's object was students and graduates of *Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Tarutung* since 2016. The research's result showed that *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* could be good solution for the problem. *MBKM* can help students gain experience outside of their study program, which will be needed when they graduate and start to seek for a job.

Keywords: curriculum adjustment; Christian Institution; Christian Education; Theology Study Program; *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*

INTRODUCTION

When students are sent by their parents to choose study programs of certain Christian Institutions such as *Insitut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN)* Tarutung, their parent's longitudinal hope is their children get jobs as soon as possible. As time goes by, this expectation fades. Many causes contribute to this condition such as: the number of *IAKN/ STAKPN* and private *STT (Sekolah Tinggi Teologi)* in entire Indonesia are almost 386¹; All *IAKN/STAKPN* and Private *STT* produce the same graduates dominated by *Pendidikan Agama Kristen* (Christian Education) and *Teologi* (Theology Study Programs). It is assumed that the total number of graduates of all Christian Institutions is 500 every year. This contributes very much to the scarcity of job-taking opportunities. This situation is proven by the conduct of the *IAKN Tarutung CPNS* test named Computer Assisted Test (CAT) in 2020. Only one position taken namely *Pra-nata Umum* provided for the person who will work as a clerk at *IAKN Tarutung* office. The applicants were Christian Education and Theology graduates. There were 400 applicants following this test. How come!

Taking job opportunity of S1 Christian Education and Theology graduates as teachers at government and private schools is limited while those who graduated from Theology are constrained by the dogma and denomination of churches, and the time schools especially private schools accept them as the teachers, they are lacking skill of teaching since they are not educated to be teachers. Due to the function of Christian institutions being aimed to provide skillful graduates as well as good jobs for their future life, there must be a way out of this. The way out will be discussed in the discussion section.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used for this work was qualitative research with a phenomenological approach.² It is categorized in that way since two of the data taken and used for doing this research were collected within four years and one of them even had been noted and administered since 2016. Of these three data, the researcher got involved. The in-depth data by the following.

First, the result of the interview conducted for *Calon Pegawai Negeri Sipil (CPNS)* was posted for lecturers of the S1

¹ Stevri PN Indra Lumintang, "Direktorat Jendral Pendidikan Kristen: Permohonan Kepada Presiden Republik Indonesia, Bapak Ir. Joko Widodo, Mengatasi Jalan Tanpa Nama, Sempit, Rusak, Panjang, Dan Buntu Bagi PTKKI Menuju Akreditasi Unggul," in *Moving from Local to Global*

Connections: Inovasi Dan Transformasi Perguruan Tinggi Kristen Di Indonesia (Jakarta: Penerbit BMPTKKI, 2022), 19.

² Lexy Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018).

Theology Study Program. Before facing the interview these CPNS lecturers had already passed test named Computer Assisted Test (CAT). This test was used to find out the CPNS knowledge about many things including *Tes Potensi Akademik* (Academic Potential Test). The interview was conducted to find out these CPNS lecturers' skills in teaching. The researcher- due to her status as the Rector of IAKN Tarutung- was involved in every interview started from 2018 up to 2021. The time these CPNS were asked to practice teaching they failed. They could not manage the prepared class as it was aimed. Even they could not understand how to start, continue, evaluate, and end the class including giving tasks to the students for the next meeting of next week's class. This condition could be understood for starting from S1 up to S2. There were no teaching subject matters provided for graduates of the Theology Study Program.

Second, there are 10 of 28 students of S2 Christian Education in the year 2020/2021 (now they are in the third semester) who graduated from S1 Christian Education of IAKN Tarutung, teaching as teachers of *Guru Kelas*, not *Pendidikan Agama Kristen* (PAK). It happens due to the situation of teacher configuration at schools where these 10 teachers serve. These ten schools already

have teachers of PAK, so these PAK teachers teach other subjects. Since they are located at *SD Negeri* of several districts around IAKN Tarutung, they should take *Guru Kelas* or *Tematik* subject matters at Open University to enable them to teach as *Guru Kelas*. It means, when they join Post-Graduate of IAKN Tarutung, they have already had two certificates: *Guru PAK* and *Guru Kelas*. In addition, for 6 years of the researcher's service of this IAKN Tarutung (from 2016 up to 2022) there is no vacancy provided by the government and local government (Pemda Tapanuli Utara) for S1 and S2 graduates of IAKN Tarutung even though the place where IAKN Tarutung situated, popular as *Kota Wisata Rohani*. This is the place where Dr. I.L. Nommensen served Christianity for his whole life. The regents of the nearer districts such as Toba, Humbang Hasundutan, Tapanuli Tengah, Simalungun, Karo, Samosir, Dairi, and Pakpak Bharat also do the same, they didn't give opportunity for S1 PAK Graduates to serve as a civil servant for teachers of PAK. The only last vacancy given to CPNS for 2 persons of *Guru PAK* by Pemda Tapanuli Utara was in 2013.³ Even Kementerian Agama (Kemenag) RI as the owner of State Christian Institutions did not provide *Guru PAK* vacancy in its recruitment for Kemenag

³ Suparmono, "Pemkab Taput Terima 40 CPNS Pelamar Umum," ANTARA News Sumatera Utara,

2013, <https://sumut.antaranews.com/berita/122382/pemkab-taput-terima-40-cpns-pelamar-umum>.

CPNS in 2021. In fact, most of the *PAK* graduates serve as *Guru Honor* at schools of public and private in these eight regencies. They are paid with *dana BOS*. The small salary they get for every 3 months could not support their daily necessities.

Third, since 2017 *IAKN* Tarutung did collaboration with cattle livestock, Drought Master at Huta Namora Siatas Barita of North Tapanuli Regency in order to provide skills of entrepreneurship, especially for S1 students of the Theology Study Program. This cattle livestock head by husband and wife: Dr. Bill Du Bois and Dr. Angie Du Bois. Both of them are natives of America. *IAKN* Tarutung makes use of their livestock area not only as a place to get skills of raise cattle and cattle products such as meat, cheese, milk, and the like but also make them as native lecturers of English and TOEFL. This decision is made to give S1 Theology Study Program Graduates entrepreneurship skills. Moreover, this is made since most of the Theology graduates will serve in remote or rural areas where inhabitants dominantly conduct their living as farmers and stock farmers.

Fourth, in 2020 in the researcher's effort in changing *IAKN* into *Universitas Kristen Negeri (UKN)* Tarutung, she went to Buya Ali Akbar, the owner of the very

huge and famous *Pesantren* Al Akbar Al Kautsar at Medan. Buya told the researcher that some priests who serve in the remote and rural areas at Rantau Parapat - this is a very large plantation of *Kelapa Sawit* at Rantau Parapat Regency came to him to beg *Ephorus* to move them to other places called as *Jalur Gemuk* simply because the congregation could not afford giving them monthly salary for their service at their Church.

Fifth, in 2016, the first year of the researcher served as *Ketua Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Protestant (STAKPN)* Tarutung – It changed into *IAKN* in 2018 – in collaboration with *Yayasan Indonesia Cerdas*, she sent 26 graduates of S1 *PAK* to Papua. Before sending them there, these 26 graduates of *STAKPN* Tarutung together with S1 *PAK* graduates of *Universitas HKBP Nommensen* Siantar and Medan were trained first as *Guru Kelas* within 3 months in order to enable them teaching primary level students as *Guru Kelas* and *Guru PAK*. It was so since they were sent to remote areas of Papua namely Manokwari, Pegunungan Arfak, Sorong, Merauke, Wamena Tolikara, and Nabire. With this condition, they are named *Guru Petra (Pendidik Transformasi)*.⁴ Up to now, the researcher is still connected with two of them namely: Harmadi Simanullang and April.

⁴ Audy Alwi, "Semangat Indonesia Cerdas Diluncurkan," *mediaindonesia.com*, 2019, [https://](https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/231507/semangat-indonesia-cerdas-diluncurkan)

mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/231507/semangat-indonesia-cerdas-diluncurkan.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Doing Curriculum Adjustment Based on *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*

The new curriculum for higher education namely *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* demands all higher education graduates having knowledge and skill of chosen study program at the same portion and at the same time.⁵ Previously what graduates have after leaving Christian Institution mostly knowledge with least skills. The graduates need special training for doing their jobs at their capacity.

As usual, the graduates of *Pendidikan Agama Kristen* (Christian Education) will be posted as teachers of *Pendidikan Agama Kristen (PAK)* at schools especially at primary schools, but some graduates are lucky enough to be teachers of PAK for secondary level (*SMP, SMA, and SMK*). Based on field facts, it is found that even though the *PAK* graduates are accepted to be teachers at schools mostly they are not teaching *PAK*, in fact, they conduct *Guru Kelas* jobs. For teaching *PAK*, they are experts, but *Guru Kelas* usually now called *Guru Tematik*, they are good teachers in the wrong place. They cannot teach at their

maximum capacity. Therefore, many of them should join Open University classes to get their S1 Program as *Guru Kelas/Tematik*.

The solution for *PAK* graduates to enable them to have a good opportunity to be *Guru PAK*, as well as *Guru Kelas*, is by giving them the skill of teaching subject matters handled by *Guru Kelas*. The only solution that should be taken out by Institution is by adjusting the curriculum provided for the *PAK* study program. Adjusting is not an easy task. This is a way out taken by a leader who has a changing leadership value in him. One with this changing leadership value will be actively doing and putting himself in the position of being a leader of Leaders, especially in line with skillful workers.⁶ The adjustment is reasonable due to the government policy in implementing *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*. *MBKM* was operated by Kemendikbudristek and started in 2020. Previously it is aimed to give University students under the autonomy of *Kementerian Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi (Kemendikbudristek)* extended skills out of their chosen major skills. *Kemendikbudristek* provides three semesters for taking skills out of their intended chosen mayor skills.

⁵ Doddy, *Buku Panduan Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Riset dan Teknologi Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi, 2020).

⁶ H. Darmakusuma, *Kepemimpinan Visioner* (Jakarta: Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2022), 60.

Due to its contribution to students out of *Kemendikbudristek*, *IAKN* Tarutung makes cooperation with Wilmar Institute at Medan for economic skills, Dirjen Pajak at Siantar, North Sumatera for having a responsibility to pay tax to the government. It works especially for those who come from Theology Study Program. It is in line with the "Giving Tithe For The Church" demanded by Presbyterian Churches. *IAKN* Tarutung got appreciation from this *Direktorat Pajak* for the successful cooperation.

The chosen skills can be taken in the same Institution out of the study program for instance: students of *Pendidikan Agama Kristen* can join a class of Management Pendidikan for three semesters in order to get the skill of working at offices or students of Theology Study Program can join a class of Music Study Program at *IAKN* Manado also for three semesters. For this kind of *MBKM*, the teaching can be done true online communication. This way will be effective to be done since students of this era are the millennial generation who could not escape from the online communication gadget in doing anything including studying reli-

gion, particularly for those with Christian and Theology Study Program backgrounds.⁷ The explanation above is proven true by the research conducted by Bilangan Research Center. It says: ... besides having conventional way of learning at school the digital native learns a lot from digital technology, digital media, and in the digital community."⁸

The question now is, how is the curriculum be adjusted since the total number of *SKS* will be more than 150 *SKS*? This is the time Educational Management Strategy gets its role in managing the subject matter distribution through combining, eliminating, changing, and the like.⁹ With this point of view the way of taking down or combining the *SKS* of subject matter in order space for inserting subject matters takes place so that skills of *Guru Kelas/Tematik* can be provided. The example: based on the existing curriculum, it is found that *Pengantar Perjanjian Lama dan Perjanjian Baru* 2 *SKS* for each given for two semesters. While fact it can be shortened only for one semester. It means there are 4 *SKS* can be provided for inserting subject matters for having skills of *Guru Kelas*. Even though the

⁷ Daniel Syafaat Siahaan, "Aku Online, Maka Aku Ada: Menggugat Eksistensi Generasi Milenial Dalam Media Sosial Berdasarkan Perspektif Spiritual Kristen," in *Generasi Milenial: Diskursus Teologi, Pendidikan, Dinamika Psikologis Dan Kelekatan Pada Agama Di Era Banjir Informasi* (Depok: Penerbit Rajawali Press, 2019), 47-69.

⁸ Handi D. Irawan, "Spiritual Generasi Muda Dan Media," in *Dinamika Spiritualitas Kristen*

Indonesia, ed. Bambang Budijanto (Jakarta: Yayasan Bilangan Research Center dan PT Gramedia, 2018).

⁹ Mayang Sari Lubis, "Perencanaan Strategik Pendidikan," *Ihya Al-Arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab* 4, no. 1 (2018): 45-59, <https://doi.org/10.30821/IHYA.V4I1.1478>.

subject matters of the *Guru Kelas* are *Bahasa Indonesia*, Social Sciences, *PPKn*, and Mathematics, of those five subject matters *Bahasa Indonesia* and Mathematics should be given priority so that the two of them should be taught for two semesters with 2 SKS for each. Then after having the opportunity to have more credits to have *Guru Kelas* skills, other adjustment taken is to combine Educational Psychology and Developmental Psychology into one subject. The content of Developmental Psychology can be implemented in the Teaching of Educational Psychology. The other redundant subject is the availability of the Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Education. The teaching can be combined because the goal of *PAK* is to produce Christian Education teachers. Automatically the point of teaching is Christian Education. With this point of view, the Philosophy of Science should be included. By conducting this policy, the way of taking 16 SKS at least to be placed as SKS for having skills of teaching as *Guru Kelas* can be gained. The final aim is the skills of teachers of *PAK* and *Guru Kelas* can be provided whereas the total SKS:150 are safe. This is of course the art of managing educational strategy in its innovative implementation. There must be a

question for this idea, that is the reason to give wider opportunity for the Christian Study Program Graduates simply for primary level teachers since based on Christian education graduates scope of working, they are capable as teachers of Primary and Secondary level students.

The common reason is the most demography of Indonesian citizens comes from the primary level. Therefore, they need more teachers to enable them to be qualified human resources. This qualified human resource is also a challenging expectation of Indonesian government. This expectation is stated clearly in the demography book such as the following: "Demography bonus will happen in 2025. They should be managed to be skillful human resources since human resources are the means of getting meaningful development of Indonesia."¹⁰

There are some treatments that can be implemented into the curriculum for S1 Theological Study Program. The situation that it is not easy for the graduates to get jobs working as priests at church makes them fail to get jobs after graduating from institution. Besides for those who could get jobs at rural areas serving as villages priests whose congregation live with almost poor

¹⁰ Riyadi Syahardani, *Materi Pokok Bidang Studi Demografi* (Jakarta Pusat: Penerbit Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2022), 55.

condition makes them having poor monthly salary too from congregations. Even many of them beside being priests of churches also as teachers for daily activities since Monday to Saturday. In fact, being a priest especially for those who serve at rural areas (after graduating from Institution), they should be able to give entrepreneurship and teaching. The reason is almost every church now - no matter what denomination it conducts - it also runs school of *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD)*. This school needs skillful teachers for giving good and proper theological support to the *PAUD* students during their learning at school within a year. Therefore, Theology Study Program Curriculum should be adjusted. The policy treats to *PAK* Curriculum can be implemented also for Theology graduates to be because Curriculum Content for Theology Study Program does not include these two skills¹¹ namely entrepreneurship especially the skill of raising healthy live stock which is badly needed by rural areas of Church congregations and teaching skills. When these two skills activated, the priest will have three skills at the same time namely: skill of preaching, teaching and entrepreneurship such as raising live stock, doing handy craft and the like.

¹¹ Nur Kholis, *Manajemen Strategi Pendidikan: Formulasi, Implementasi, Pengawasan* (Jakarta: CV Pustaka Setia, 2012).

The Opportunity of *PAK* And Theology Programs Graduates to be Teachers Abroad

In connection with implementing curriculum adjustment for *PAK* and Theology Study Programs, the chance of sending the graduates abroad is open widely. It had been informed several years ago by Sirait.¹² She stated the following: The higher education is required to have a mission, a vision and a clear orientation, open and have a long-term goal to create productivity of graduates that can be calculated. To obtain the output that can be competitive at the national level as well as more capable to compare with graduates from overseas education. In turn, it is proven by the information issued by *Kemendikbudristek* in collaboration with *Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara Reformasi Birokrasi (PAN RB)* printed in *Kompas* dated on October 21, 2021, that many foreign governments such as Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Thailand, Japan, and so on need more teachers for teaching subject: religion (Christian), Language (Arabic, Indonesian, English, Mandarin), Counseling Guidance, etc. The chance will be opened every year. This must be taken out and here is also the way out of reducing the scarcity of teacher's job opportunity in country.

¹² Jumaria Sirait, "Quality Assurance of Higher Education," in *Issues in Research and Their International Publication* (STAKPN Tarutung Press, 2017), 152.

The only suggestion gives for responding this opportunity is by demanding the institution to give the graduates the skill of using English as means of communication not as subject learned. It is so because when they teach at listed countries above the only reasonable language being used is English. For *IAKN Tarutung* needs, there must be additional time of teaching English as means of communication provided. It can be handled down by treating additional class with zero SKS. This job is conducted very well by Dr. Bill Du Bois and Dr Angie Du bois due to their background as native speakers of English. The success of doing this idea is also as fulfillment of Bible Mission of Singapore in doing Bible distribution and engagement through overseas Mission effort¹³ because Bible Mission of Singapore Through Gospel Light for Indonesia (GLFI) is also a partner of *IAKN Tarutung* in doing global Christian Education.

CONCLUSION

Based on all explanations explained above it could be concluded that both Private and Government Institution or *Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Kristen Negeri* and *Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Swasta (PTKKN and PTKKS)* should practice the open minded to the changing situation faced

by the graduates to be of Christian Education and Theology Study Programs through giving them the wider opportunity to get jobs after finishing their study. This expectation can be fulfilled merely by practising the adjustment for curriculum distribution provided for them.

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