



An Analysis of the Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Addressing Social Diversity at SMK Negeri 1 Doloksanggul

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a nation renowned for its remarkable diversity encompassing culture, religion, ethnicity, race, language, and traditions. This pluralistic context presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in fostering social harmony within educational environments. Schools, as microcosms of society, often reflect these diversities among students, making the role of teachers crucial in cultivating tolerance, mutual respect, and unity. Within this framework, Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers play a strategic role not only in imparting religious knowledge but also in shaping students' moral and social character. They are expected to embody the values they teach, serving as exemplary figures, mentors, and motivators who guide students to appreciate diversity as part of God's creation. This study analyzes the role of PAK teachers in addressing social diversity at SMK Negeri 1 Doloksanggul through a descriptive research approach. The findings reveal that PAK teachers contribute significantly to building inclusive classroom environments by promoting dialogue, empathy, and cooperation among students of different backgrounds. They demonstrate Christian values through actions and interactions, emphasizing biblical principles such as love, justice, and respect for others. Moreover, their guidance helps students internalize positive attitudes that prevent prejudice and discrimination. Ultimately, the role of PAK teachers in managing social diversity is integral to character education and nation-building, fostering a generation capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: Role of teacher, Christian Religious Education, teachers, Students

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation built upon the foundational motto “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*”, which translates to “Unity in Diversity.” This phrase is not a mere slogan; it embodies a profound philosophical principle that shapes the national identity and moral fabric of Indonesia. Stretching from Sabang to Merauke, the country is characterized by vast geographical, cultural, and social diversity. Such diversity-spanning religion, ethnicity, race, culture, and social groups-is not a weakness but a form of wealth and strength that reflects Indonesia’s

pluralistic essence. These differences, when understood and managed harmoniously, create a beautiful mosaic of unity that must be preserved for the continued stability and progress of the nation. Indonesia's diversity extends beyond ethnicity and religion to include differences in ideology, politics, customs, economic status, and social background. These differences are inevitable in a dynamic social environment, yet they should not be seen as causes of division. Rather, they should be perceived as opportunities for learning, empathy, and cooperation. The true challenge lies not in the presence of diversity itself but in how individuals and communities respond to it. Building social harmony requires awareness, education, and moral guidance—specially among young people who are still developing their understanding of identity, tolerance, and social responsibility.

However, diversity also brings inevitable challenges. Throughout history, Indonesia has experienced various social and religious tensions rooted in intolerance and misunderstanding. One tragic example is the bombing incident in Surabaya, where several Christian churches were attacked during Sunday worship. Such events illustrate how the failure to appreciate differences can lead to violence, prejudice, and deep social wounds. These conflicts serve as reminders of the importance of education—particularly moral and religious education—in nurturing mutual respect and empathy among Indonesia's citizens. Doloksanggul, a region located in North Sumatra, represents a microcosm of this broader national diversity. Although the area has a Christian majority, it still encompasses various ethnicities, cultural traditions, and socio-economic backgrounds. The agricultural nature of the community, where most residents are farmers, adds another layer of social dynamics, such as class differences, economic disparities, and varying family backgrounds. While Doloksanggul has not experienced major open conflicts, subtle forms of social tension can still emerge due to inequality or differences in lifestyle and belief. Therefore, promoting social harmony and inclusiveness remains a vital aspect of community and school life. Within this context, schools—especially SMK Negeri 1 Doloksanggul—serve as a crucial setting where social diversity is most visibly manifested and experienced. Students come from different families, economic conditions, ethnic groups, and even denominations within Christianity. These differences can influence their interactions, communication styles, and group dynamics. Hence, the role of teachers becomes essential in fostering an environment that promotes understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect among students.

Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers play a particularly significant role in this regard. Their responsibilities go beyond academic instruction; they are moral guides, character builders, and role models for students. Through their teaching and example, PAK teachers can help students internalize Christian values such as love, forgiveness, humility, and justice. These values are central to the Christian faith and serve as effective tools for managing diversity in a peaceful and constructive way. By modeling Christ-like behavior, teachers demonstrate how to respect differences and embrace others as fellow human beings created in the image of God.

Furthermore, PAK teachers are tasked with developing students' social intelligence and empathy. They teach that diversity is not a threat but a divine gift that enriches human life. Lessons on tolerance, cooperation, and service to others are integrated into classroom activities, discussions, and moral reflections. Teachers encourage students to engage in community service, inter-group collaboration, and open dialogue—practices that strengthen their ability to coexist harmoniously despite differences. In this way,

religious education becomes not only a subject of spiritual learning but also a vehicle for building civic character and national unity.

The researcher's motivation for conducting this study stems from the awareness that diversity, if not properly guided, can easily lead to misunderstanding, prejudice, and social tension. By analyzing the role of PAK teachers in addressing social diversity at SMK Negeri 1 Doloksanggul, this study seeks to explore how these educators contribute to peacebuilding and social integration within the school environment. Specifically, it investigates the strategies, attitudes, and teaching methods employed by PAK teachers to minimize conflicts and foster inclusivity among students from different backgrounds. Preliminary observations suggest that PAK teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Doloksanggul have adopted a holistic approach that combines moral instruction, practical mentoring, and personal example. They emphasize respect for others, empathy, and cooperation in all aspects of school life. Through consistent guidance and pastoral care, they create a learning environment where differences are acknowledged, discussed, and appreciated rather than suppressed or ignored. This approach aligns with the Christian understanding of love (*agape*) as an unconditional commitment to the well-being of others, regardless of background or status.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive research method aimed at providing a detailed analysis of the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in engaging with social diversity within the school environment to generate positive influences among students. The study seeks to understand how PAK teachers contribute to building a harmonious atmosphere amidst differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, and social background. In a diverse school context, the teacher's role is not limited to delivering religious instruction but extends to fostering moral growth, empathy, and mutual respect among students. By guiding learners to appreciate diversity as a reflection of God's creative design, PAK teachers help cultivate a sense of unity and inclusivity within the educational setting.

The data for this study were collected through various sources, including books, academic journals, and credible websites, as well as interviews with students. The interviews explored students' perceptions of diversity, their experiences of interacting within a multicultural environment, and the challenges they encounter in maintaining harmony. Through these data sources, the research aims to identify both the obstacles and the potential strategies for enhancing positive relationships among students from different backgrounds. The descriptive approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of real conditions within the school. Rather than testing hypotheses, this method focuses on providing an in-depth depiction of how PAK teachers play an active role in shaping students' attitudes toward diversity. The study highlights that effective PAK teachers do more than teach biblical doctrines—they embody Christian values such as love, humility, and tolerance in daily interactions. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, serving as moral exemplars who promote unity and understanding within the school community. Ultimately, this research emphasizes that the presence of PAK teachers is vital in ensuring that diversity within schools becomes a source of strength and learning rather than a trigger for division.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is an essential part of human life that involves both learners and educators. It functions not only as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a medium for shaping character and personality. Teachers, as the primary actors in education, hold a strategic role in developing students into independent individuals with integrity and strong moral values. The teaching profession, therefore, is not limited to the transmission of academic content; it encompasses moral guidance, value formation, and personality development. Teachers are not merely instructors but also mentors, guides, and role models in various aspects of students' lives. Their task includes developing the character, disposition, and competencies of learners so that they may become responsible and productive citizens. Within the broader educational landscape, teachers from diverse disciplines contribute to this transformative process. Among these, Christian Religious Education plays a particularly vital role in nurturing students' spirituality and moral awareness.

According to Samosir (2019), a professional Christian Religious Education teacher is one who performs duties beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. They motivate and guide students to apply the values they learn in daily life, while simultaneously fostering faith and spiritual growth. Thus, the role of a PAK teacher is not only instructional but also transformational—helping shape students into individuals who live according to Christian ethics and values, grounded in love, integrity, and compassion.

Social Diversity in the School Environment

Schools function as microcosms of society, reflecting the diversity found in the wider community. Social diversity refers to the presence of differences among students in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, race, language, and socioeconomic background. Within this context, schools become both a challenging and promising space for developing tolerance, inclusivity, and mutual respect.

Banks (2006) argues that social diversity can serve as an asset if it is managed wisely. However, without thoughtful management, it can lead to discrimination, conflict, and social polarization. Therefore, the teacher's role as a social mediator is crucial in creating a learning environment that is safe, inclusive, and grounded in compassion. The classroom should be a space where students learn to embrace diversity as part of their educational journey, not as a source of division. Teachers must cultivate empathy and mutual understanding among students, helping them appreciate cultural differences as an opportunity to learn about others. In diverse school environments, Christian Religious Education plays an essential role in bridging differences, promoting peace, and instilling moral sensitivity. Through biblical teachings about love, justice, and forgiveness, students are guided to see diversity as part of God's plan for humanity.

The Strategic Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Addressing Social Diversity

In the face of increasing social diversity, Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers serve as agents of transformation who communicate spiritual values and Christian ethics to students. Their mission goes beyond teaching religious doctrine—they are called to embody and impart core values such as love, forgiveness, tolerance, and social justice. According to Siahaan (2024), the roles of PAK teachers in managing social diversity include: 1) Providing students with understanding about religion and interfaith tolerance.

2) Promoting interreligious dialogue through discussions and cross-faith activities. 3) Teaching universal values such as love, justice, and peace. 4) Applying inclusive approaches in the learning process. 5) Engaging students in social outreach activities such as visits to orphanages, community service, or humanitarian programs.

Through these initiatives, PAK teachers help students internalize the essence of Christian love—loving others regardless of differences. Such teachings enable students to develop the ability to coexist peacefully with peers from various backgrounds. The ultimate goal is not merely cognitive understanding but the cultivation of a compassionate heart that values harmony and respect in a pluralistic society.

Collaboration Between Christian Values and Pancasila

Another important approach in character education is the integration of Christian values with the noble principles of Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational philosophy. According to Darmawan (2023), PAK teachers can play a central role in this integration by:

- a. Guiding students to understand and practice the values of Pancasila in daily life.
- b. Teaching Christian principles that align with the five tenets of Pancasila, such as humanity, justice, and unity.
- c. Encouraging tolerance and appreciation for religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity.
- d. Demonstrating the application of Christian and national values through personal example.

This integrative approach ensures that students are not only spiritually nurtured but also develop a strong sense of patriotism and civic responsibility. By blending faith and nationalism, PAK teachers foster learners who are both religious and nationalistic—individuals who uphold faith-based ethics while contributing positively to Indonesia's multicultural society. Such alignment reinforces moral integrity and social cohesion, emphasizing that Christian teachings and Pancasila share a common vision of peace, justice, and unity.

Preventing Radicalism Through Christian Religious Education

Christian Religious Education also plays a vital role in preventing radicalism and intolerance within the school environment. Laia (2024) highlights that PAK teachers can contribute to the prevention of radical ideologies by:

- a. Teaching values of love and peace as modeled by Jesus Christ.
- b. Encouraging students to think critically and reject ideologies that contradict humanitarian values.
- c. Implementing inclusive curricula that emphasize cooperation, justice, and tolerance.
- d. Involving students in social and interfaith activities that foster solidarity.

Marbun (2021) asserts that accurate and biblically grounded teaching serves as a safeguard against the influence of extremist doctrines. As Jesus teaches in Matthew 22:39, believers are commanded to "love your neighbor as yourself." This principle forms the foundation of peace education within Christian instruction. Hence, PAK teachers must embody this unconditional love in both their words and actions. Their genuine compassion becomes a living testimony that counters hatred and division, promoting peace and understanding among all students.

Through active engagement and consistent modeling of love and humility, teachers can reduce the risk of radical thought developing among young people. By fostering critical awareness and empathy, students learn to discern truth, reject violence, and embrace cooperation as expressions of faith. In this way, Christian education becomes a powerful tool for building resilient, peace-oriented learners.

Exemplary Living as the Pillar of Christian Education

Exemplary living stands as one of the central pillars of Christian education. A PAK teacher is expected to be a living example in speech, behavior, and lifestyle. As written in 1 Timothy 4:12, every teacher of faith must be “an example in love, faith, and purity.” The authenticity of a teacher’s life profoundly influences how students internalize the lessons taught in class. A teacher who demonstrates consistency between words and actions is more likely to earn students’ respect and trust. In the context of social diversity, such exemplary conduct offers a concrete model of how to live harmoniously amid differences. When students witness fairness, patience, and compassion in their teacher’s daily interactions, they learn how to embody these values themselves.

Furthermore, role modeling extends beyond the classroom. It includes how teachers treat colleagues, parents, and the broader community. A teacher who upholds Christian values in every relationship provides a living lesson that transcends theoretical instruction. This consistency transforms moral education from abstract ideas into lived experiences that shape students’ character and worldview.

Ultimately, the PAK teacher’s role as a model of faith and virtue strengthens the moral foundation of education itself. In a society marked by pluralism and complexity, such teachers become beacons of light—guiding students toward a life characterized by love, justice, humility, and peace. By integrating faith with daily practice, PAK teachers nurture students who are spiritually mature, socially responsible, and committed to the common good.

CONCLUSION

Education, at its deepest level, is not merely the transmission of knowledge but a profound moral and spiritual endeavor that seeks to shape the whole person. Teachers, especially those in the field of Christian Religious Education (CRE), bear a sacred responsibility to nurture students into individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also morally upright and spiritually grounded. In an era marked by increasing social diversity and cultural plurality, the role of CRE teachers extends far beyond academic instruction. They act as mentors who guide students toward mutual respect, as peacebuilders who foster reconciliation, and as living examples of Christ’s love, patience, and humility in everyday interactions. Through faith-based character education, CRE teachers integrate Christian principles—such as compassion, justice, forgiveness, and service—into the learning process. They also harmonize these spiritual values with national ideals, promoting a sense of unity and shared purpose among students from different backgrounds. By modeling Christ-like attitudes, they demonstrate how faith can coexist harmoniously with diversity, turning the classroom into a community of acceptance and moral growth. Ultimately, the influence of CRE teachers in shaping character within a diverse environment reflects the broader goal of education: to cultivate

individuals who embody wisdom, empathy, and a sense of moral responsibility. Their consistent example of ethical integrity and inclusivity contributes not only to students' personal formation but also to the creation of a just and peaceful society that honors both God and humanity.

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