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Application of Design Thinking as a Renewable Pastoral Method in Faith Formation Based on Age and Sustainable in the Faith of The Alpha Generation

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Abstract

This research aims to explore and analyze the positive influence of implementing Faith Formation based on age groups and sustainability (Formatio Iman Berjenjang dan Berkelanjutan) by applying design thinking as a pastoral method on the faith formation of Alpha Generation children. Faith Formation based on age groups and sustainability, and the pastoral focus of the Archdiocese of Semarang aims to form Catholics who believe in an intelligent, resilient, missionary and dialogical way. This process leads to information (knowledge), formation (formation), and transformation (change to be more faithful to achieve the perfection of the Christian life). The Design Thinking method is useful for designing creative and innovative implementation strategies according to the age level and needs of Alpha generation children. The research applies qualitative research methods through observation and interviews with children who join the Children's Faith Assistance (PIA), facilitators, parents, and parish priests to see the experience and application of FIBB with the Design Thinking approach for children. Based on the observations and data collection results, FIBB, with a Design Thinking approach, has worked very well and has addressed the community's needs, for example, the implementation of Children's Catechesis, which is held in the smallest unit of the parish, and Catholic Parenting. Both mentoring programs are a form of innovative faith formation design that is based on the community's specific needs. Through the design thinking approach created in coordination with FIBB, children's attendance in Children's Faith Development and donations for them have increased significantly.

Keywords

Children's Catechesis, Design Thinking, Faith Formation, Generation Alpha

INTRODUCTION

Changes and developments in the times, as well as the development of science and technology and the lifestyle of today's society, impact the character and personality of children in each generation, especially the current new generation,

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namely the alpha generation. According to Mark McCrindle, the alpha generation is born between 2010 and 2025, the successor to Generation Z, whose differences are insignificant. From an early age, this generation is surrounded and accompanied by technology that makes them unable to escape from it, so they become the most transformative compared to other generations. This development certainly has a significant impact on the character and faith of children today.

According to Mark McCrindle, this alpha generation is a generation that will not be able to be separated from mobile phones, is less able to socialise, has low creativity, and tends to have an individualistic nature. These tendencies, according to him, will result in a generation that will be socially realised. This kind of influence is certainly an opportunity but also a challenge for today's catechesis for children currently participating in Children's Faith Formation (PIA).

The Tiered and Continuous Faith Formation present in the Archdiocese of Semarang as a form of enthusiasm and awareness of the faithful life of the people becomes education and guidance that leads to the formation of each person. The main purpose of this Leveled and Continuous Faith Formation (FIBB) is to form Catholic individuals who are intelligent, resilient, missionary, and dialogical. The hope of this FIBB boils down to information (knowledge), formation (formation), and transformation (change for more faith in order to achieve the perfection of Christian life).[1]

In order to face the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the complexity of social dynamics, tiered and sustainable faith formation needs to be present with an approach to faith education that is adaptive and responsive to the dynamics of the times. St John Padua Parish in Kota Baru applies Design Thinking as a creative method that is relevant as a solution to the faith problems of the Alpha generation (PIA Level). Design Thinking is a tool used in problem-solving, problem designing, and problem forming. Design Thinking is human-centred, and the process originates from and is aimed at humans.

The tiered Formation of Faith that focuses on each level requires a mentoring management system that offers innovations that adapt to the sophisticated technology in the disruptive era. So, Design Thinking skills can answer the problems

[1] Keuskupan Agung Semarang, "Formatio Iman Berjenjang dan Berkelanjutan Harus Memiliki Semangat Gumregah," *Keuskupan Agung Semarang*, November 24, 2023, https://kas.or.id/formatio-iman-berjenjang-dan-berkelanjutan-harus-memiliki-semangat-gumregah/.

of alpha generation faith and train mentors to have empathy to correct what is happening in the mentoring process to date. This is used to realise conflicts and identify other problems to develop Tiered and Sustainable Faith Formation at the level of quality and superior children. Thus, research on the Leveled and Sustainable Faith Formation for children needs to be carried out to optimise the design of the Leveled and Sustainable Faith Formation in accordance with the ideals of the KAS Church, namely "The Realisation of a Civilisation of Love in a Prosperous, Dignified and Faithful Indonesian Society".

RESEARCH METHOD

The writing of this journal uses qualitative field research methods (Field Research). The author's basis in this research is based on assumptions and also the assessment of methods by collecting, analyzing, and combining data. In this research, the author tries to find an original understanding of people's experiences, as felt by the people concerned by interviewing PIA assistants, children who participate in PIA, and parents of PIA children. This research will observe and analyze the current conditions in the implementation of Tiered and Continuous Faith Formation at the level of Children's Faith Formation (PIA) in St. Antonius Padua Parish, Kota Baru. The data collected will be presented in the form of a narrative to provide a complete and detailed picture of the problem under study. The results of the interpretation and findings of this research will consider the context and formulate findings that can contribute to the development of faith accompaniment for children and, of course, the actualization of the implementation of Leveled and Sustainable Faith Formation in St. Antonius Padua Parish in Kota Baru.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Faith education for children from an early age is fundamental, urgent, and essential.[2] Faith does not happen on its own and, therefore, requires efforts to prepare and enable it to happen. This urgency is based on the fact that the adult Catholic's ability to reflect on his life is helped by his ability to prepare when he was young; the prominent activities of adult Catholics generally stem from his experiences as a child; the ability to form a faithful family comes from childhood, especially in his

[2] Joas Prasetya, *Dasar-Dasar Pendampingan Iman Anak* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2008), 19.

relationships.[3] In view of this, faith formation at the childhood level needs to be planned and realized by understanding the aspects of children's lives.

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 has an effect on social dynamics and the way children respond to things around them, including in terms of faith. Generation Alpha, the youngest generation, which is the future of the Church, grows up surrounded by technology as their friend and entertainment from an early age. This is a challenge of faith that is a concern of the Church to lead these children to experience an encounter with God in the midst of technology that is their age.

Alpha Character

The alpha generation has grown up close to technology, making it a medium that is always sought after as their guide. This generation is predicted to be the largest generation that has high technological awareness and is globally connected to one another.[4] This makes children born in the 2010s have unique characteristics, including:

(1) Always connected to the internet and social media (McCrindle, 2014: 232).

As children of this generation are close and side by side with technology, they are a generation that spends much time in front of gadget screens for education and entertainment, including spirituality.

(2) Specializing in skills (becoming more specialized) (Fadlurrihim et al., 2020: 184).

Children in this generation belong to a generation that is critical and thinks in detail in looking at something. This is based on the ease of accessing much information and gaining many skills and even becoming an expert in certain skills (Santosa, 2015: 24).

(3) Likes instant and practical things

This generation tends to like practical problem solving and hesitates to take the time to complete a problem-solving process. This is because they were born into a world and age that is all instant (Santosa, 2015:21).

(4) Love freedom

[3] Maria Goretti Sugiarti, *Pendampingan Iman Anak* (Diktat) (Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Agama-Universitas Sanata Dharma, 1999), 70.

[4] M. McCrindle and E. Wolfinger, "Generations Defined," *Ethos* 18, no. 1 (2010): 8-13.

The alpha generation has a favorite in terms of freedom of opinion, creativity, and similar attributes. In this case, they prefer things that are exploratory rather than memorized (Santosa, 2015: 23).

(5) Desire for recognition

The recognition desired in this generation is a reward in the form of praise, gifts, or appreciation for their unique existence.

This generation has more opportunities and challenges in all aspects of education, culture, and religion. For this reason, they must always be guided and encouraged so that their opportunities can be optimally utilized and they are fortified from things that lead them astray.

Design Thinking in Faith Formation is Tiered and Sustainable

In the Directorium of Faith Formation, recognizing the context of faith formation is very important not only to see the challenges but also to determine the right choices, strategies, and pastoral approaches to developing faith. Looking critically at the context of the current era and its development which is the context for the life of the people in living their faith. In this case, the maturation of faith will be more mature, perfect, and full in Christ with evangelization.[5]

Evangelization is a process of passing on God's revelation, which involves the ministry of the word, conversion, and further faith and repentance.[6] This awareness of the mission of evangelization is the responsibility of all the baptized. So, in every process, attention and approach are needed so that evangelization becomes fruitful.

The modern age is a consequence of the living Church constantly resonating in human history in the form of teaching, invitation, proclamation, prayer, and living testimony. So, the more advanced the times, the quality of education must be improved.[7] For this reason, the quality of faith education must also be carried out with innovative, effective and efficient management. The urgency of this innovation is to refresh and renew the existing ones to evaluate and find ideas to solve the

[5] Dewan Karya Pastoral KAS, *Direktorium Formatio Iman Keuskupan Agung Semarang* (2018), 33.

[6] *Petunjuk Umum Katekese* (2020), 50–57.

[7] Ahmad Muazar Habibi and Akhtim Wahyuni, "Strategi Marketing Lembaga Pendidikan Islam 'The Outstanding School of Muhammadiyah Jawa Timur' di SMP Muhammadiyah 12 Sendangagung Paciran-Lamongan," *International Journal on Integrated Education* 3, no. 5 (2020): 89, https://www.neliti.com/publications/334098/strategi-marketing-lembaga-pendidikan-islam-the-outstanding-school-of-muhammadiy.

problem of faith education, especially in the Basic Direction of the Archdiocese of Semarang, which is a tiered and sustainable Faith Formation.

Design Thinking is an iterative thinking dynamic that seeks to understand users, challenge assumptions, identify problems, and redefine problems with strategies and solutions that may not be immediately apparent from the outset.[8] Design thinking is a collaboration of methods from many disciplines to obtain solutions. The most interesting thing about Design Thinking is that it focuses not only on what is created but also on user satisfaction.

Initially, Design Thinking was used by designer experts with a human-oriented approach. However, along with the development of science, it can now also be applied in the world of education or can be called "design thinking for educators." This is the author's interest to try in the field of faith education in the Church to answer the problems experienced in the process of faith mentoring. The stages used are known as the five components, which include the following elements:

Empathize

At this stage, an investigation is carried out to find out the desires, thoughts, and needs of humans, which, in this case the main focus is the needs of alpha generation children in following faith mentoring. This stage is used to explore the problems experienced by participants. Assistants at this stage have sensitivity and listening skills. This thought process always strives to continue to learn and understand the symptoms that allow conflict to occur in educational institutions. This was started during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that involved PIA stakeholders. By listening to various parties, Kotabaru Church tries to listen to God, who speaks in this day and age. The results of this FGD discussion show that the voice that becomes a problem in PIA assistance includes:

- Obstacles in attending Sunday School in the Parish because not all parents can take their children due to work constraints.
- Boredom with the mentoring routine that only sits and sings, mentoring creativity is less challenging. Some children are more interested in participating in mentoring at the Christian Church.

[8] Afina Maullya and Suci Wulandari, "Empathy dan Design Thinking Dalam Inovasi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam di Era Disruptif," *Paedagogia* 7, no. 10 (2021): 26.

- Child mentoring is still perceived as an activity and a burden, not an opportunity to help children grow and develop in faith.
- Child mentoring requires money to attract children's attention.

***Define* (*Determination*)**

The process of analyzing information to direct designers to insights and user needs. This is the stage of defining the problem to find common ground. In this case, the mentor tries to identify any problems that hinder mentoring. Once a companion is found, they can determine the policies that will be taken in the next improvement steps.[9] In this FGD, problems have been identified, and tried to find common ground on these problems. The result is PIA's mindset and organizational structure regarding eliminating the dichotomy of PIA companions so that they work together towards the progress of mentoring so that it can better embrace all children. Faith mentoring in the parish is still product-oriented, namely "what I think is good is what is shown" not what children need or customer-oriented. So it is necessary to be aware of the characteristics of children belonging to the alpha generation who have a different model of mentoring from generations.

***Idea* (*Idea*)**

The formulation of this idea is based on a concept map, thinking framework and risk management from the process of providing children's faith assistance. Ideas that will become new policy innovations must be based on mutual agreement before entering the implementation stage so that each stakeholder understands the direction of the new goals of the Tiered Faith Formation, which is a pastoral focus for the improvement of children. The ideas contributed must be needs-oriented and realistic. So currently, Kotabaru Parish is carrying out the process of creating a mentoring curriculum for one year, starting with screening every idea from all PIA mentors by looking at all the children's potential, difficulties, and obstacles in the mentoring process. This is still in the process of being prepared. However, several programs will definitely take place as a consideration of the results of the FGD, namely the establishment of children's faith assistance in every environment, the SUPER PIA program, Parent Catechesis, and Kobar Kids Got Talents as a place for children to express themselves in accordance with his interests and talents.

[9] Tryana Hafilda Dewi, "Design Thinking Budget and Savings Planner Inspiration of the Hadith of the Prophet," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 1, no.1 (2021): 23–30.

***Prototype* (*Innovation product/prototype*)**

At this stage, the companion decides and ratifies new regulations, policies, and innovations that have been mutually agreed upon. The resulting innovation products in the form of creative innovations such as interactive learning methods can also be made by teachers themselves.

***Test* (*Trial*)**

The process of testing the results of trials of breakthrough ideas or innovations is not patent but can return to the previous process or stage. This can happen if it is felt that the results of implementation have not been optimal. In the faith formation for children in the environment which has been carried out over the last three months, quite satisfactory results can be found. In one environment, namely the St. John Paul, Tukangan has carried out the Children's Faith Mentoring process three times. Data was obtained that this meeting experienced an increase in the number of children, from initially only five people to finally increasing to 17 people. Not only that, parents are quite supportive and provide good feedback by waiting and participating in dynamics with their children.

CONCLUSION

The development of the times really influences a child's growth and development both psychologically, in personality and in their characteristics. However, this progress cannot be used as an excuse for the Church's decline to move beyond the times and science and technology. On the contrary, this development is used as a breakthrough innovation in developing faith education in a Tiered and Sustainable Faith Formation. The concept of Design Thinking, which was originally widely used in the economic field, is also an innovation that can be used in the field of religion or faith education. This research can be used as suggestions for managing faith assistance by changing the 'product oriented' mindset to 'customer oriented'. This means that mentoring is different from 'what I think is good' but rather 'what they need.'

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