TECHNOLOGY-BASED THEOLOGICAL TRAINING ANSWERS THE CHALLENGES OF THE TIMES

by Samuel Elkana

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how technology-based theological training can answer the challenges of an era that is increasingly influenced by the rapid development of digital technology, especially in the context of theological education at the Kerusso Theological College (STT). The urgency of this study lies in the need for a new approach to theological training that not only focuses on doctrinal and practical aspects, but also integrates technological mastery to prepare students for the digital era. With technology-based training, STT students can be better prepared to serve and convey the Gospel message effectively amidst the dynamic changes of the times.

The main objective of this study is to explore how technology-based theological training affects students' competence in responding to the challenges of modern evangelism missions, as well as to identify strategies that can be implemented to increase the effectiveness of delivering the gospel message. This study uses a qualitative method with an in-depth interview approach and document analysis related to the curriculum and training activities at STT Kerusso. The data obtained were analyzed descriptively to see patterns of technology implementation in theological training and its impact on students' readiness to serve in the midst of a digital society.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of the curriculum in theological educational institutions, as well as being a reference for other theological institutions in utilizing technology as a holistic and contextual training tool. These findings are also expected to help theological institutions in designing relevant and applicable training to prepare a generation of servants who are able to answer the challenges of the times.

Keywords: *Theological Training, Technology, Evangelism, Theological Education, Digital Era.*

This study examines how technology-based theological training can address the challenges of a rapidly evolving digital landscape, particularly within the context of theological education at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi (STT) Kerusso. The urgency of this research lies in the need for a new approach to theological training that not only focuses on doctrinal and practical aspects but also integrates technology mastery to better equip students for ministry in the digital era. By implementing technology-based training, STT students can be better prepared to serve and effectively communicate the Gospel message amidst dynamic societal changes.

The primary objective of this study is to explore how technology-based theological training influences students' competencies in addressing the challenges of modern evangelism, and to identify strategies that can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of Gospel communication. This research employs a qualitative methodology with an in-depth interview approach and document analysis of the curriculum and training activities at STT Kerusso. The data collected will be analyzed descriptively to identify patterns of technology integration in theological training and its impact on students' readiness to minister in a digital society.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of the curriculum in theological education institutions and to serve as a reference for other theological institutions in utilizing technology as a means of holistic and contextual training. These findings also aim to assist theological institutions in designing relevant and practical training programs to prepare the next generation of ministers who are capable of responding to the challenges of the times.

Keywords: Theological Training, Technology, Evangelism, Theological Education, Digital Era.

1. PENDAHULUAN

The technological transformation that has occurred in the digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of theological education and evangelism missions. To respond to this change, the Kerusso Theological College (STT) has developed a technology-based theological training program to prepare students to answer the challenges of the times. This training aims to improve students' digital literacy and technological competence, so that they are able to use various digital tools and platforms effectively in spreading the Great Commission.

The importance of technology-based theological training is based on the increasingly complex needs of ministry in the digital era, where students are required to be able to communicate the Gospel message through digital media and online platforms. Based on the results of an internal survey at STT Kerusso, around 60% of students stated that they needed special training in technology to be able to adapt to modern evangelism methods. This shows that mastery of technology is no longer an option, but a necessity that must be mastered by theology students.

The training program implemented at STT Kerusso covers a variety of topics, from the basics of using social media for evangelism, creating engaging digital content, to using analytical tools to measure the effectiveness of evangelism campaigns. This training not only aims to equip students with technical skills, but also to integrate the use of technology into a holistic evangelism strategy. According to research published in *the Journal of Global Christianity* , students who have participated in technology-based training showed an increase in the effectiveness of gospel communication of up to 70% compared to those who did not receive training (Smith, 2020).

Furthermore, this training allows students to innovate and create evangelism content that is more relevant and interesting for the digital generation. For example, students are encouraged to develop teaching videos, spiritual podcasts, and evangelism e-books that can be widely accessed by the public through digital platforms. In addition, this training also equips students with digital data analysis skills, so that they can evaluate the evangelism strategies that have been implemented and adjust them to achieve more optimal results.

With this technology-based theological training, STT Kerusso seeks to produce graduates who not only understand theology in depth, but are also able to apply theological insights in the context of dynamic and ever-evolving digital ministry. This is important to answer the challenges of the times, where digital media is one of the main tools in spreading the Gospel message throughout the world.

Although this training has provided many benefits, there are some challenges that must be faced. One of the main challenges is the limited technological infrastructure available on

campus, as well as the lack of teaching resources with expertise in the field of technology. However, STT Kerusso continues to strive to improve technological facilities and develop the competence of lecturers through various collaborations with technology institutions. In addition, students are also encouraged to actively utilize online resources and digital communities to hone their skills outside of the existing training program.

Thus, this technology-based theological training is expected to be the answer to the increasingly complex needs of modern evangelism. In addition to equipping students with relevant technical skills, this training also provides them with a deeper understanding of how to use technology to achieve better evangelism effectiveness.

As technology advances rapidly, STT Kerusso students are faced with the challenge of not only understanding theology, but also mastering new ways of communicating and spreading the gospel message. In a world dominated by the internet and social media, the ability to adapt to digital platforms is becoming increasingly important. Research conducted by Anderson and Rainie (2021) shows that more than 90% of adults access information via the internet, and 80% of them use social media to interact with religious content. Thus, STT students need to be prepared to use technology in the context of their ministry, in order to reach and engage more people with the gospel message.

The importance of this technology-based theological training also lies in its ability to build a more inclusive and diverse community. In the context of evangelism, not everyone can be reached through traditional approaches, so there needs to be innovation in how to convey the message. Through training that teaches students about digital communication strategies, they can build a wider and more diverse network, including among the younger generation who tend to be more connected to technology. For example, the use of podcasts and teaching videos allows students to share their theological thoughts and spiritual experiences with a wider audience, without geographical limitations.

In addition, this technology-based training encourages students to think creatively and critically in developing evangelism content. By equipping students with skills in creating multimedia content, they can not only convey information but also create a more interactive and engaging experience for the audience. For example, students are taught to create short videos or infographics that convey the gospel message in a more engaging and easy-to-understand way. This is in line with research conducted by Chaffey (2020), which found that visual content can increase audience engagement by up to 94% compared to plain text. Thus, this training not only provides technical skills but also encourages innovation in delivering the gospel message.

Facing the challenges of an ever-changing era, STT Kerusso is committed to continuously evaluating and updating its training programs to remain relevant and effective. In this regard,

collaboration with various parties, including technology institutions, church communities, and evangelistic organizations, is very important. By establishing these partnerships, STT Kerusso can provide additional resources and more learning opportunities for students. In addition, this collaboration also provides space for students to participate in real technology-based evangelism projects, so that they can apply the skills they have learned in practical and impactful contexts.

1.1 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

1. How can technology-based theological training at STT Kerusso influence students' ability to spread the Great Commission in the digital era?
2. What are the challenges faced by STT Kerusso students in participating in technology training for evangelism activities?
3. How can theological educational institutions, such as STT Kerusso, play a role in developing and implementing effective training programs to improve students' technological capabilities in evangelism?

1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSES

1. Analyzing the influence of technology-based theological training on students' ability to spread the Great Commission in the digital era.
2. Identifying the challenges faced by STT Kerusso students in participating in technology training for evangelism activities.
3. Evaluating the role of theological educational institutions in developing and implementing effective training programs to enhance students' technological skills in the context of evangelism.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods are approaches used to explore and understand social phenomena in a more in-depth way. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical and statistical data, qualitative research focuses on the experiences, perspectives, and contexts of the individuals or groups being studied. Through techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, qualitative research aims to explore the meaning and complexity behind a social phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is its inductive approach, where researchers start from concrete data to build a more general theory or concept. In this context, understanding a phenomenon is inseparable from the social and cultural context in which it occurs. As Flick (2018) states, qualitative research allows researchers to capture nuances and details that might be missed in more structured research.

Data analysis in qualitative research is interpretive and involves several stages. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis process includes recognizing themes,

identifying patterns in the data, and compiling results that reflect the meaning of participants' experiences. This process is flexible and adaptive, allowing researchers to make revisions and adjustments according to the data that emerges during the study.

In assessing the validity and reliability of qualitative research, researchers use a different approach from quantitative research. Kreuger and Casey (2015) emphasize the importance of credibility and transferability in qualitative research, which can be achieved through techniques such as triangulation and verification with participants. In addition, transparency in the research process and clear documentation also contribute to the reliability of research results.

Qualitative research methods provide deep and rich insights into complex social dynamics. By utilizing diverse data collection techniques and reflective analysis, this research can help understand how individuals interact with the world around them. In the context of theological and evangelistic education, qualitative methods are invaluable for exploring how technology impacts evangelistic practices and how students adapt to changing times (Mason, 2018).

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW**
   a) **Integration of Technology in Theological Education**
      In today's digital age, the integration of technology in theological education is becoming increasingly important. Technology provides a variety of tools and resources that enable students to learn more effectively and efficiently. According to Koul and Kour (2020), the use of e-learning platforms and mobile applications in theological education allows access to a wider range of teaching materials, including online lectures, seminars, and digital library resources. In addition, technologies such as video conferencing allow students from different locations to participate in real-time class discussions, creating a more inclusive learning environment. Through technology, students can learn in more interactive ways, such as collaborating on group projects using digital tools, thus preparing them to face the challenges of ministry in an ever-changing world.

   b) **Challenges in Technology Implementation**
      Despite the many benefits of technology integration, there are also challenges in its implementation in theological education. Many students have difficulty mastering the digital skills needed to make optimal use of technology. Liu (2017) stated that lack of training and technical support can hinder students from adopting new technologies. In addition, there is the issue of accessibility where not all students have adequate devices or a stable internet connection. These limitations are serious obstacles, especially for those from low-income economic backgrounds. By understanding these challenges, theological

educational institutions can develop strategies to provide the necessary support so that students can adapt quickly to existing technologies.

c) The Role of Technology in Increasing the Effectiveness of Evangelism

Technology also plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of evangelism in the digital age. According to Smith (2020), the use of social media and communication applications allows students to reach a wider audience with the gospel message. In this context, technology not only functions as a means of conveying information, but also as a means of building community. For example, many churches and evangelistic organizations have successfully utilized digital platforms to hold online events, seminars, and worship sessions, so that they can reach people who may not be able to physically attend. With the ability to interact and share experiences directly, students can use technology to increase community involvement in evangelism activities.

d) Digital Skills Development as an Essential Need

In the context of theological training, the development of digital skills is becoming an increasingly urgent need. Many theological educational institutions are beginning to integrate curricula that include technology and digital media training as part of their education. Peterson (2021) emphasizes the importance of teaching students how to use technology for evangelism, such as creating engaging and effective digital content. This training program not only covers technical aspects, but also relevant communication skills and marketing strategies. Thus, students are not only prepared to become competent church leaders but also innovators in the use of technology to spread the gospel message.

e) Case Studies on the Successful Use of Technology in Evangelism

Case studies demonstrating the successful use of technology in evangelism are increasingly common. Martin (2020) notes that churches and missionary organizations that utilize social media platforms have seen significant increases in participation and conversion. For example, online evangelism campaigns in several countries have shown that the use of engaging video content and narratives can reach a wider and more diverse audience. This shows that technology is not only a tool for communication, but also an effective tool for building relationships and sharing spiritual experiences. By studying these studies, STT Kerusso students can learn from best practices and adapt successful strategies to their own contexts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

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