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Innovation and Leadership in Religious Institution

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Abstract

Several studies have found that innovation is able to enhance the performance of an organization. Nowadays, the urge to innovate does not only applied to profit-oriented organizations, but also to non-profit organization. Religious institution, in the case of this study is the church, holds an important role in the society's life. This study will explore the development of innovation in the church and understand the effect of innovation to the church's performance. This research is based on the qualitative paradigm with a multiple case study strategy. Data collection is done through an in-depth interview, and a focus discussion to several informants from three churches, which are pastors, assemblies, and congregations. The study found that almost all pastors, assemblies and congregations agreed that innovation is an important aspect to maintain the church's sustainability. The emergence of innovation can bring a positive impact to the church's performance. The church is innovating solely for the benefit of a financial surplus, but more than that innovation is needed for the congregation to grow positively and to support the ministry of the church. In addition, the research also found that the innovation process depends greatly on the pastor's leadership style. The result of this research contributes to give information about how the relationship between innovation and leadership style, as well as other practical aspect that is how an accurate leadership style can enhance innovation.

Keywords: Innovation, Leadership, Religious Institution.

Introduction and Literature Review

Innovation is an important aspect and become the key of success in starting a business (Comberg et al., 2014; Carlson and Usher, 2016). Innovation distinguish between entrepreneur and plum entrepreneur (Anthonny, 2016). A person can be a businessman, but not necessarily an entrepreneur, while entrepreneurship is definitely an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is a person who has innovation ideas so they can continue to seek opportunities or to create opportunities to innovate. Innovation is not only important for entrepreneurs to start their business, but also to build the business. Innovation has been the core competency for every business to compete and to be the market leader.

Innovation does not only occur in business institution, but also in non-business-oriented institution. Several innovations are made by the government, schools, and hospitals, which are not profit-oriented institutions (Hisbani et al., 2015; Putra, 2016; Ulansari, 2015). In these studies,

it appears that innovation is a very important aspect for the institution. There are problems faced by the institution, such as the availability of human resources and the large cost needed. However, innovation become one of the strategies needed to improve the performance of non-profit institutions. The process of innovation within an organization is affected by the leadership style in the organization (Parashakti et al., 2016). Therefore, study regarding the process of innovation and the leadership roles are interesting to be studied further.

This study is different from previous studies that rarely discuss innovation in religious institutions. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the innovation process and the leadership role within religious institution, in this case at the church institution.

According to Anthony (2016), innovation is an idea that is different and brings effect to the environment. Of the many definitions, Anthony's definition is the simplest yet the most meaningful one. An idea is considered as innovative when it has different features compare to other products or services, and the differences have an impact to the society or a person or an organization. The impact could be found in several forms, such as an increased performance of an organization, or an increased in employee welfare in a company (Sofyan, 2017; Sitohang, 2017; Amrulloh and Hidayat, 2018; Brancati et al., 2017). Furthermore, Ries (2015) stated that every organization needs innovation to form a radical success. Through innovation, an organization will be able to compete and even to be the market leader in its industry. Ries also stated that it is time for start-up business to focus on creating innovation because their products or services will be quickly accepted in the market. Innovation is also an essential strategy for business starters, as various innovations of products or services and the marketing will be the differentiator from the other business or competitors (Nugroho, 2015; Guillebeau, 2015; Widjaja and Wiratama, 2014).

Innovation in Non-profit Institutions

Some researchers did studies about innovation at religious education institution. Hadi (2015) conducted a research on how innovation in the subject curriculum of Islamic education can improves the learning quality. Ismail (2015) did an innovation study in Islamic education. The result found that education of prophetic tradition can build and shape the character and morale of students in SMPN4, Salatiga, therefore students show a noble, respectful, and tolerant behavior. Ali (2013) conducted a study at Islamic Religious universities. The study found the importance of innovation in curriculum design to enhance the quality of the graduates through the addition of graduate competencies.

Leadership and Innovation

Leadership style influences the innovation process in every single organization (Gunawan and Surya, 2015; Harianto et al., 2016; Fitrianna and Agustina, 2017). Parashakti (2016) found an empirical evidence that leadership affect innovation in banks. The research proves that leadership is able to motivates the followers and able to transform the resources to achieve the company's goal as a whole. Gunawan and Surya (2016) found similar findings, which that leadership influences the organization's innovation.

From the studies discussed, there is still a low number of studies that explore the role of innovation in churches, thus a study about this topic will be interesting to do, as well as the role of leadership in the innovation process.

Methodology of Research

This study aims to deeply investigate the process of how the innovation process and the role of innovation works in the church institution. To achieve this aim, the researchers used qualitative method with multiple case study strategy. The researchers conducted in-depth-interviews to several parties who have successfully innovated and created impacts to the community. In-depth interviews with open-ended question will be conducted to obtain in-depth and holistic data on how the informants develop innovations. The researchers chose credible informants, which are leaders, clergy, and congregation in a religious institution.

In this study, the researchers used triangulation of data to reassure the validity of the research. Triangulation of data is done during the process of data collection and data processing, so that during the time of interview took place, the researchers has analyzed the data. This study consists of three steps, Anticipatory data Reduction, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The research findings will bring a new insight on how innovation appear in religious institution that were previously rarely studied.

Discussion and Findings

Interviews were conducted to seven informants who are actively serving in the church. This section will describe how innovation conducted by the informants: the innovation that was undertaken, the innovation process, and the role of leadership in the innovation process.

Innovation: An Important Aspect for the Church

The first informant is one of the church's congregations in Yogyakarta. With a total of 2000 adults and 500 Sunday-school children, this church continues to grow not only in the number of congregation, but also in the facilities and services. The growing facilities includes parking space for the congregation and extra rooms to held additional services. This church also established an educational service from elementary school to high school with international curriculum orientation. The researchers were interested to the innovation programs at the children ministry/ the Sunday school service. The informant is a young pastor who serves at the children ministry/ Sunday school service. A number of innovation that has been done are as follow.

Kupon Kesetiaan (KS). KS is a coupon distributed by the Sunday school ministry via the Sunday school teachers to the children. Every child who attends the Sunday school service will automatically given a KS coupon. The Sunday school service is held twice a week, on Sunday as part of Sunday service and on Tuesday as a Sunday school prayer meeting. The informant saw that only a small number of children comes to the Tuesday's prayer meeting. Due to this reason, the informant and the team gave two extra coupons for children who attend the Tuesday's prayer meeting. Each year, the Sunday-school ministry held a bazar for the Sunday school children. They sell school supplies, including books, stationaries and others. The Sunday school children can exchange their coupons that they have earned for a year with any school supplies that they need.

Kegiatan Kuliner (KK). The Sunday school ministry held similar activity as the extra curriculum from other schools. They organized several activities, such as choir, ballet, modern dance, and others. All of the Sunday school children are able to join all the activities. The Sunday school ministry provides competent teachers to teach the Sunday school children according to the child's area of interest. This activity does not seem to be a type of activities done by other

Sunday schools ministry. Most Sunday schools usually organize activities that are related to character and faith building for the children. Thus, the KK activity is a breakthrough for the church.

The next innovation is the most important one. It is the well-structured curriculum for the Sunday school service. In the past. The Sunday school service in church X did not have a unique curriculum; it was similar to other churches that used standard book that is used by other churches. Or, other churches that did not use the standard book, most use a simple module made by the pastors or the Sunday school teachers. In church X, a systemized curriculum was made and it discuss starting from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. The curriculum runs for a year and it also explain the teaching methodology. The curriculum is well structured; thus, the Sunday school children are able to well understand and to retell the topic they did on the Sunday school services to their parents. Every child will get a weekly module according to the student's level.

The other informant comes from Banyuwangi and choose to develop the church community in traditional way: to build a church community, not the physical church building. They develop a community that brings impact to the society by building networks between congregations. This process was first pioneered by the pastor. Several innovations held are building a rehabilitation center for crazy people, setting up a nursing home, doing home renovation, providing English training in prisons, and giving English certificates. In addition, there are internal innovations, which are innovation on the rules, Sunday mass, and the worship structure. The other innovation program is to develop trainings to equip the congregation (e.g. making bread, rice box, etc.) and create programs that covers the congregation potentials. For example, congregations who have photography skills can contributes on retreat programs, or doctors can focus on social work, as well as people who specialized in haircuts and sell groceries. One of the major impact of innovations is the new policy to not provide funding to the pastor. The pastors are given chances to create their own business. This policy allows the pastors to make an effort to fulfill their daily needs in their own creative ways. Through this, the pastor and team creates training to develop the congregations' entrepreneurial skills in hope to increase their economic conditions.

Why does Innovation Emerge?

There are several reasons behind the emergence of innovation, mention as follow:

1. The emergence of problems

The first reason is due to the occurrence of problems in the organization. For example, in the Sunday school's curriculum. Some parents do not feel satisfied with the information that their children understand. Whenever the parents asked their children about what the child get in the Sunday school, their children give unsatisfactory answers. Hence, parents feel that the Sunday school service needs to develop a strong and an easy-to understand teaching that are applicable to the children's daily life. With this feedback, the Sunday school ministry sees a problem in the curriculum.

2. The need to achieve the organization's vision and mission

The assemblies and pastors had set vision and mission that they aim to achieve together. An important aspect to achieve their vision and mission is to implement strategies and tactics. Innovation is their decision to achieve the church's vision and mission.

3. The need to provides

The need to provide the best service for the congregation makes the church innovates. The need is not only to benefits the church community, but also for the entire community surrounding the church. A church sees their presence as creating a positive impact to the whole or wider community, not just for the church's members. They argue that innovation can help them to create new things and create major impacts on the society. As an example, an extra-curricular that was made by one of the churches to develop the Sunday school's children's talents. Thus, it encourages the church leaders to think about activities that can be attended by the Sunday school children. The children have a space to engage in, associate, and to create without worrying about the negative environment that can affect their character. This seems to match with the parent's expectation of creating a sense of security for their children.

The innovation process arises from the need of the congregation to improve their standard of living, the pastor sees that the congregation needs to be empowered to have a better income. Thus, the pastor developed an innovation, which is creating a strong relational culture in the church. Through this action, a good relationship between the pastor and the congregation are build, as well as among the congregations. The process of creating a positive culture is done through developing an interactive fellowship between pastors and congregations. The interaction does not only via a face-to-face setting, but also through social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, both in personal or in a group setting. The name of the forum is also unique, which is the Indomie forum.

There are two things arises from relational cultural innovation, which are seeing the congregations as important individuals, and improves the mutually constructive personal relationship.

The Emergence of Innovation

The innovation process is pictured as follow:

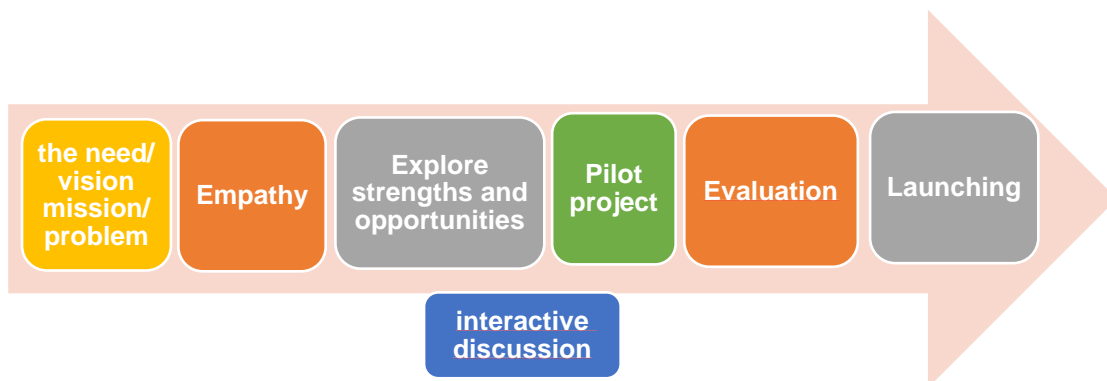


Figure 1. Innovation process

Figure 1 shows how innovation process emerge in the institutions. First, there is a need to be fulfill, or problem to be solved, or to achieve the institution's vision and mission. Next, the emergence of empathy due to the previous three reasons encourage the organization managers to complete or to achieve it. The organization managers will consider the institution's strength and opportunities that can be used to strengthen the organization. After looking at the available opportunities, the manager makes a pilot project that continuously being evaluated. After going through the evaluation process, they will launch or start the innovation program. During the process of identifying the problems and achieving the vision and mission, there is an interactive discussion process within the innovation team. The interactive discussion will generate ideas on conducting the pilot project up to the evaluation. In this case, the strength of the innovation team and a strong leadership becomes very important.

In an organization, having an innovation team is very important aspect. In fact, most informants deliberately give their time to think about innovation. A strong innovation team is an important capital for the emergence of innovation. As one of the informant said:

“team is important, no matter how good we are alone a team is much stronger, therefore I use it to innovate, team is what makes as strong”

The innovation team serves as a “think tank” for the organization, starting from the identification aspect to the implementation. This team is the one who will dedicate special time to innovate and coordinate with the church's leaders (pastors and assemblies).

Leadership: An Important Factor to Innovate

The informant stated that the leader holds an important factor in the process of creating innovation. A leader who always supports the innovation team to identify, plan, and implement the innovation idea are among the key success factor for innovation. The leader must have some abilities to create and to encourage innovation. The leaders should be able to see the capabilities of his/her members and identify potential members. The team member can consist of people with various educational backgrounds and experiences, as it can be the strength to develop the organization. A leader who can see the member's potential will have an easier way to reach every innovation opportunities. They will be able to combine their strength and use it to well-use and develop every opportunity. Furthermore, a leader should be able to create a strong and harmonious team. As explained in the previous section, the innovation team is an important factor in creating, developing and implementing innovation. In addition, a leader must be able to make decisions, especially decision to choose innovation alternatives, determine the time to implement the innovation, and decide whether the innovation can be continued or need to be stopped depending on the amount of impact it brings to the community.

This study also found the role of leaders. First, leaders must inspire the people or the team to innovate. Leaders should also start to innovate or start inspiring their members to innovate. An informant said that,

“if the leader does not start to change, then a change will not be possible. The leader is doing something, innovations start from the leader, putting the right people on the right

place, a well-fitted passion, as soon as they know, it will be given to the leader, the leader must think quickly”

From the informant’s saying, it appears that the leaders’ behavior greatly affects the people. The people need to have an example/ a role model by the leader. Then, through intense discussions with the innovation team, leaders should have the capabilities to find innovation. Although innovation usually arises from an intense interaction with the innovation team, but the role of the leaders is to push their team to find an innovation idea especially on critical time. At the very least, leaders must always participate intensely in the interactive discussions to find innovation. There are three important aspects of leaders, which are to inspire, to find, and to encourage innovation. In addition to these three factors, leaders should provide full supports to achieve the innovation.

Some examples of support are as follow.

- Leaders should always appreciate the innovation team’s action. Appreciation can be shown in various ways, such as giving rewards, or using the product or services that the team made.
Appreciation can also be shown by giving the members chance to share their success to the other members. In this context, they can feel appreciated because they are given the time to help and guide the other.
- Facilitates the members, not only via providing space or equipment, but also policies that support the innovation.
- Leaders provides funding to support all activities related to the innovation. This study found that funding is an important aspect (although not the most important) to make an innovation successful.

In the process of interacting with the innovation team, leaders must have an effective communication channel. The communication channel will support formal interaction, such as scheduled meetings that are specifically aimed to create innovations. Several effective communication channels include WhatsApp and Line. The informants stated that these communication channel is very effective to enhance the innovation process. An important thing to trigger effective communication is the role of the leader.

Conclusions

Innovation is an important aspect for every organization, including religious institutions, in this case the church. The main findings of this study are as follows. Church Leaders play important role in creating innovation. There are several important roles i.e. church leaders have to facilitate the policy to support innovation, support the innovation team, and give appreciation. Leaders should have the ability to drive innovation and implement the innovation ideas

In term of innovation process, the innovation process arises from finding a problem, the emergence of needs, and the desire to reach institution’s vision and mission. The process of innovation process starts from these three reasons, then the process continues by empathy, identifying strengths and opportunities, pilot project, evaluation, and launching/ the real execution. Success of these iteration process lies in the interaction process. The role of interaction process is to make sure that the process is going well.

There are some limitations in this study, one of them is in regard to the way researchers interpret information provided by the informants. Furthermore, some informants have limited time to be interviewed, thus it is hard for the researchers to obtain the data. Some suggestions for this study and for future studies is to enlarge the research samples, and divide the samples into several "streams" of the church, such as Presbyterian and Pentecostal, which both have their own uniqueness in the management and the leadership. Research about innovation in a church institutions is an important and interesting issue to be discuss due to the importance of innovation in the development of church today.

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