BRIDGING MISSION AND PRACTICE: INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL VALUES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract. In Christian primary schools, the school mission plays a central role in shaping both educational goals and classroom practices. The mission reflects a commitment to spiritual, moral, and social development alongside academic achievement. This study aimed to explore how teachers interpret and implement such missions in everyday classroom activities. Conducted in Christian primary schools in Bali, the research employed a mixed-methods design, including surveys, interviews, and classroom observations involving 44 teachers. Data collection tools examined teachers' perceptions, instructional strategies, and observable integration of Christian values. The results revealed that most teachers actively integrated Christian values such as love, honesty, and forgiveness across subjects, including science and civics, not limited to religious instruction. Daily practices like morning devotions and contextual Bible-based reflections supported students' spiritual growth. Teachers also served as role models, promoting character development through consistent behavior. Challenges identified included curriculum constraints, diverse student religious backgrounds, and the influence of digital culture. Facilitators included strong teacher commitment, institutional support, and collaboration with parents. The findings highlight the effectiveness of mission-aligned pedagogy in fostering students' moral, social, and spiritual growth. Contributions: This study contributes to values-based education literature by offering empirical insights into how Christian missions can be operationalized in primary classrooms, emphasizing teacher agency, institutional culture, and contextual adaptability.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of a school extends beyond a formal statement of purpose; it functions as a guiding vision that shapes the educational experiences of both students and educators (Bayrak, 2020; Breznik & Law, 2019; Hladchenko, 2013). In Christian primary schools, this mission is deeply anchored in spiritual, moral, and social values, seeking to cultivate not only academic competence but also character formation, empathy, and a sense of community responsibility (Alawode, 2020; Sciberras, 2024; Williams, 2009; Zandstra, 2012). Despite the prominence of such values in institutional mission statements, a persistent challenge remains in translating these ideals into consistent and meaningful classroom practices that genuinely influence students' learning experiences and moral development (Cosgrove, 2023; Ramirez et al., 2025; Stacey & Mashayekh, 2025).

This challenge is particularly salient in faith-based educational settings, where the integration of religious and moral values into pedagogy is not merely aspirational but foundational to institutional identity (Stacey & Mashayekh, 2025). While mission statements often articulate a clear spiritual vision, the extent to which this vision is enacted in daily teaching practices varies considerably. The resulting gap between declared mission and pedagogical reality raises critical questions about how school values are operationalized, sustained, and experienced in classrooms, especially during the formative years of primary education.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the mission-driven pedagogy framework, which emphasizes alignment between institutional vision and instructional practice (Nir, 2021; Yildiz, 2024). Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes school missions not as static declarations but as dynamic frameworks that inform curriculum design, teacher decision-making,

and the overall ethos of the learning environment (Furco, 2023; Nucci et al., 2014; Sayan, 2023; Weinberger & Patry, 2016). Within Christian education, this perspective is reinforced by research highlighting the central role of teacher intentionality, collaborative pedagogies, and community engagement in embodying faith-based values within everyday instructional contexts (Dirksen, 2020; Hagues, 2024; Harianto et al., 2020; Hosic et al., 2025).

Recent developments in Christian education further illuminate the complexity of mission implementation. The global expansion of Christian educational institutions, particularly outside North America, has been driven by processes of privatization and massification, though these developments have produced uneven outcomes across contexts (Glanzer, 2024; Glanzer et al., 2011). At the same time, many Christian institutions are navigating pressures toward secularization, prompting ongoing debates about how to preserve religious identity while engaging pluralistic academic environments and upholding academic freedom (Chirwa & Mukuka, 2025). The growing emphasis on indigenous and contextual approaches to education also challenges Western-centric models, underscoring the need for mission-driven practices that resonate with local cultures and communities (Glanzer, 2024; von Sinner, 2022).

Technological advancement represents another significant influence shaping contemporary Christian education. Digital tools increasingly mediate teaching and learning processes, reshaping curriculum delivery and pedagogical interaction in ways that both expand access and introduce new ethical and formative challenges (Legg, 2012). Alongside these developments, interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism have become central concerns, particularly in multicultural educational settings. Many Christian schools are now tasked with fostering faith-based identity while promoting respect, coexistence, and understanding among students from diverse religious backgrounds (Hill & Woolley, 2022; Sultmann et al., 2024; Uzunpolat & Ecer, 2023). Concurrently, there has been a renewed emphasis on vocational formation and character education, integrating faith with personal, social, and professional development. In Catholic education, these dynamics are further reflected in increased international collaboration, which blends spirituality and pedagogy within a global educational framework (Franchi, 2018; Wuriningsih et al., 2023).

Despite this growing body of scholarship, research on mission alignment remains disproportionately focused on secondary or higher education contexts. Studies that specifically examine how Christian primary school missions are interpreted and enacted by teachers remain limited. Moreover, existing research often addresses either the conceptual articulation of mission or its pedagogical implementation in isolation, rarely integrating both dimensions within a single analytical framework. This gap restricts a deeper understanding of the mechanisms, contextual conditions, and educational outcomes associated with mission-driven pedagogy in early schooling.

To address this gap, the present study adopts a multidimensional, context-specific approach, focusing exclusively on Christian primary schools. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the study seeks to capture both teachers' subjective interpretations of the school mission and the observable practices through which these interpretations are enacted in classrooms. Data collected through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations enable a comprehensive examination of how teachers internalize, adapt, and translate institutional vision into daily instructional practices. The study also considers institutional factors, including leadership, professional support, and resource availability, that may facilitate or constrain the alignment between mission and practice.

Accordingly, this study pursues three main objectives: first, to examine how teachers interpret and implement Christian school missions in primary classroom settings; second, to identify key factors that influence the integration of moral and spiritual values into teaching practices; and third, to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of mission-aligned pedagogy in fostering students' holistic development, encompassing moral reasoning, social-emotional competence, and civic engagement.

By bridging theoretical perspectives and classroom realities, this research contributes to the advancement of values-based education literature. It offers empirical insights into the practical

enactment of Christian school missions, enhances understanding of faith integration in early childhood education, and provides evidence-based implications for educators and policymakers seeking to strengthen mission alignment within Christian primary schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how Christian educational missions are interpreted and implemented in classroom practices at the primary school level. The selection of this design was grounded in the nature of values-based education, which involves both measurable instructional patterns and deeply contextualized pedagogical experiences. The quantitative approach enabled the identification of general trends in teachers' perceptions and self-reported practices, while the qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences, instructional strategies, and classroom realities. This integration of methods ensured alignment with the research objectives, which sought to examine the extent, processes, and effectiveness of mission-driven pedagogy in Christian primary schools.

The research was conducted in several Christian primary schools located in Bali, Indonesia, operating under Protestant and interdenominational educational foundations. These schools implement the national curriculum while intentionally integrating Christian values into daily educational practices such as morning devotions, prayer, moral reflection, and character formation activities. Data collection took place during the regular academic period in the 2025 school year, allowing the researcher to observe natural instructional processes within authentic classroom contexts.

The population of the study consisted of primary school teachers employed in these mission-based Christian schools. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus. Teachers were included if they were actively teaching at the primary level, had a minimum of one year of teaching experience in a Christian school, and were directly involved in classroom instruction and value integration. Administrative staff and non-teaching personnel were excluded. A total of forty-four teachers participated in the quantitative phase of the study, representing various grade levels and subject areas. From this group, eight teachers were purposively selected for the qualitative phase based on the depth, clarity, and relevance of their questionnaire responses, ensuring data saturation and rich contextual insights.

The study examined three main variables: teachers' interpretation and implementation of the Christian school mission, factors that facilitated or inhibited the integration of Christian values into teaching practices, and the perceived effectiveness of mission-aligned pedagogy on students' holistic development, including moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. These variables were operationally defined through indicators derived from values-based education literature and were reflected across the questionnaire items, interview prompts, and classroom observation guidelines.

Data were collected using three complementary instruments: a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended questions designed to capture teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and perceived student outcomes related to Christian mission implementation. Semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for teachers to articulate their experiences, pedagogical reflections, challenges, and strategies in integrating Christian values across subjects.

To ensure the quality of the instruments, content validity was established through expert review involving two educational researchers and one theological educator, who evaluated the clarity, relevance, and conceptual alignment of the instruments with the research objectives. The reliability of the quantitative instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients exceeding 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Methodological triangulation across questionnaires, interviews, and observations was employed to enhance credibility, while member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants for confirmation and accuracy.

The data collection process followed a systematic sequence beginning with formal

permission from school leaders, followed by pilot testing of the instruments. Questionnaires were then administered to all participants, after which interviews and classroom observations were conducted with the selected teachers. Qualitative data were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect confidentiality.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to identify overall patterns in teachers' perceptions and practices related to mission implementation. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed through thematic analysis, which involved open coding to identify meaningful units of data, axial coding to establish relationships among categories, and selective coding to generate overarching themes that captured the enactment of Christian educational missions in classroom contexts.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were carefully observed. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences. Sensitivity to participants' faith backgrounds and institutional contexts was upheld to ensure respect for personal beliefs and the integrity of the school mission, and all data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

Descriptive statistics from the teacher questionnaire provided an overview of the perceived implementation of Christian missions, as shown in Table 1.
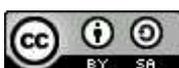
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom	Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation	Student Effectiveness & Holistic Development
N Valid	44	44	44
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	47.9545	19.0455	21.7045
Median	47.0000	19.0000	21.0000
Mode	44.00	20.00	20.00
Std. Deviation	4.49783	2.39140	2.25759
Variance	20.230	5.719	5.097
Range	15.00	10.00	9.00
Minimum	40.00	14.00	16.00
Maximum	55.00	24.00	25.00
Sum	2110.00	838.00	955.00

The highest mean score was observed in the domain of " Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom" (M = 47.95), indicating a strong alignment between teaching practices and Christian mission values as perceived by teachers. The domains of " Student Effectiveness & Holistic Development " (M = 21.70) and " Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation " (M = 19.05) followed.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of the interview and observation data identified four interconnected themes that illustrate how Christian values are interpreted and enacted within classroom settings, as seen in Table 2. A central theme was the integration of the Christian mission into teaching practices, where teachers actively infused values such as love, honesty, and forgiveness across a range of subjects. Rather than limiting faith-based instruction to religious education, teachers embedded biblical principles into general subjects—for example, incorporating scripture in science lessons to emphasize the sanctity of the human body, or applying Christian ethics during civics lessons to promote empathy and community engagement.

Table 2. Qualitative Findings

Quotation	Code	Subtema	Subtopic	Memo
Morning devotion helps children understand themselves as God-fearing individuals.	Morning prayer; devotion; fear of God	Faith-based learning	Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom	The teacher starts the day with a devotion to form the child's spiritual consciousness from the beginning of the learning activity.
Pancasila lessons can be inserted with Christian values such as making plans to visit orphanages.	Contextual learning; the value of love; Social Action	Reflective contextual learning	Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom	The values of love and service are integrated in social and contextual learning to form caring.
Teachers must be an example for students in speaking and behaving.	Teacher examples; Christian behavior; Role Model	Exemplary teachers & spiritual leadership	Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom	Teachers become a living reflection of the school's mission, demonstrating faith through daily actions.
Collaboration between teachers and parents is needed to support character formation.	Collaboration; external support; The role of parents	External support of the school	Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation	Collaboration with parents strengthens the habituation of values at home, expanding the impact of the school's mission.
Students learn to help friends, be honest in exams, and appreciate differences.	Empathy; Honesty; Respect differences	Students' moral & social growth	Student Effectiveness & Holistic Development	The moral and social changes of students show the internalization of Christian values in daily life.
Cultural and religious pluralism requires adaptation without losing the value of faith.	Diversity of faith; value adaptation; Cultural Challenges	Contextual barriers	Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation	Teachers navigate religious diversity without losing faith identity through an adaptive approach.
Teachers must upgrade themselves in order to enter the world of digital children.	Digital adaptation; generational challenges; Teacher Innovation	Teachers' personal challenges	Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation	Teachers face technological challenges by developing learning innovations based on Christian values.
Christian values help students understand themselves as God-fearing individuals.	Spiritual growth; personal prayer; Values of Faith	Students' spiritual growth	Student Effectiveness & Holistic Development	The spiritual development of students is observed through behavior, prayer reflection, and moral strengthening.
The example of teachers is the key so that the values of faith do not stop in theory.	Consistency of faith; the integrity of the teacher; Spiritual Leadership	Consistency & integrity of teachers	Interpretation & Implementation of Christian Mission in the Classroom	The consistency of teachers' examples is a key factor in the success of integrating faith values in the classroom.
All parties must have an impact and participate in the school's mission.	Spiritual leadership; community collaboration; Shared participation	School community leadership	Facilitator Factors & Barriers to Value Implementation	Leadership that serves moves all school residents to live a common mission.

Another prominent pattern was the embodiment of Christian values through teacher conduct. Educators functioned not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars, modeling consistent behavior and speech aligned with Christian teachings. Their interactions with students demonstrated humility, patience, and integrity, thereby reinforcing the values they aimed to cultivate.

The findings also highlighted the use of contextual and reflective learning strategies. Teachers often connected classroom content with real-life applications and community-based activities, such as social service projects or moral storytelling based on biblical narratives. These approaches enabled students to engage with values in a manner that was both meaningful and developmentally appropriate, deepening their understanding and personal reflection.

In addition, routine spiritual practices emerged as a consistent element of daily school life. Activities such as morning devotions, collective prayers, and the sharing of biblical stories created an environment saturated with spiritual meaning. These rituals served not only to reinforce faith-based learning but also to cultivate a communal sense of purpose and moral direction among students.

Interpretation and Implementation of the Christian Mission in the Classroom (RQ1)

The study demonstrated that teachers consistently and purposefully integrated Christian values not only in religious education but also throughout general subject areas. This deliberate integration reflected a profound alignment between classroom practices and the school's overarching Christian mission. Such alignment was manifested through various strategies, including teachers modelling values, incorporating contextual and reflective learning approaches, and embedding daily spiritual rituals. Collectively, these practices created a cohesive environment that reinforced the Christian ethos across the entire educational experience.

This pattern of practice is consistent with existing research that underscores the importance of connecting institutional mission with everyday pedagogical decisions. Prior studies have emphasized the value of this alignment in faith-based education (Anderson, 2025; Ogunji, 2012; Saayman, 2013). The integration of values into non-religious academic content affirms the observations made by Hosic et al. (2025), who argued for the feasibility and effectiveness of values-based learning across disciplines. Moreover, the role of teachers as spiritual mentors aligns with findings from Finn et al. (2010) and Hagues (2024), who emphasized the significance of teacher agency and spiritual leadership in shaping students' moral development. The use of culturally responsive and context-based pedagogies also reflects broader educational practices shown to foster character formation, as discussed by Harianto et al. (2020).

The credibility of these findings was strengthened by the study's use of mixed methods, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and direct classroom observations. This methodological triangulation provided both breadth and depth, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how Christian values were enacted. Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. Its scope was confined to a particular geographical and denominational context, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other settings. Additionally, self-reported data from teachers may have been influenced by social desirability bias (Marcucci, 2020; Martin, 2022), and the presence of an observer in classrooms could have affected natural teacher-student interactions (Gholaminejad, 2023; Jackson, 2017; Lekwa et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2024; Scherzinger & Wettstein, 2019; Wettstein et al., 2018).

Despite these limitations, the study offers several important implications for educational practice. It highlights the need for teacher education programs to prioritize the development of competencies that enable educators to integrate Christian values across disciplines meaningfully. Curricular frameworks should also be designed to support this integration without diminishing academic depth or alienating students from diverse religious backgrounds (Singha & Singha, 2023; Singha et al., 2023; Smucker, 2024). Furthermore, school leaders should continue to cultivate institutional cultures that view teachers as mentors of faith and character, not merely as instructional facilitators (Buchanan, 2013; Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Eliahoo, 2016; Maksum et al., 2025; Metcalfe et al., 2024; Newburgh, 2019; Schuttloffel, 2019; Sunde & Ulvik, 2014).

In terms of future directions, further research is needed to understand how the

implementation of Christian mission evolves over time and across different educational levels. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of values-based instruction on students' spiritual and moral development. Comparative studies across various faith-based and secular school systems could also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how mission-driven pedagogy can be contextualized and sustained within diverse educational environments.

Factors Driving and Inhibiting Vision Implementation (RQ2)

The study identified a range of enabling and constraining factors that influenced how effectively the Christian school mission was enacted in daily teaching practices. Among the key drivers were teachers' personal spiritual commitment, collaborative school culture, and strong leadership support. These elements empowered teachers to implement values-based strategies with creativity and persistence. The presence of a shared vision among staff and consistent involvement of parents further reinforced the transmission of Christian values both in school and at home. On the other hand, the study also uncovered significant barriers, including curriculum time constraints, religious diversity within classrooms, and the disruptive influence of digital and popular culture. Additionally, some teachers expressed a lack of adequate training and confidence in delivering character education aligned with faith-based principles.

These findings reinforce existing scholarship on the importance of institutional and cultural support in mission-driven education. The role of leadership and community collaboration is widely recognized in the literature as foundational for sustainable faith-based schooling (Dirksen, 2020; Stacey & Mashayekh, 2025). The identification of digital culture as a barrier is consistent with contemporary challenges faced by educators navigating the values tensions between secular media and spiritual formation (Sayan, 2023). Furthermore, the recognition of teacher capacity as a limiting factor echoes earlier calls for more targeted professional development in moral and spiritual pedagogy (Chalwell, 2025).

Methodologically, the study's strength lies in its integration of perspectives from both quantitative and qualitative sources, which enabled a more holistic analysis of complex and often context-dependent factors (Friedl-Knirsch & Anthes, 2024; Grace et al., 2023; Locke & Lees, 2021; Tashakkori et al., 2015; Tashakkori & Newman, 2022). Interviews provided rich narratives of teacher experiences (Abuzant et al., 2021; Ambler, 2016; Malik et al., 2024; Patrick, 2013; Suryobroto et al., 2022; Wrench, 2017), while classroom observations validated these accounts through concrete examples of practice (Blazar et al., 2018; Donaghue & Heron, 2025; Nielsen, 2015). However, the research is limited by its reliance on self-reporting for subjective perceptions and its context-specific focus on Christian schools in Bali, which may not fully capture challenges in broader or more secular educational environments.

These insights suggest several implications. First, institutions should provide structured support systems, including faith-integrated training and peer collaboration opportunities, to enhance teacher confidence and competence. Second, school leaders should intentionally build inclusive yet mission-consistent cultures that welcome diversity while maintaining spiritual integrity. Finally, there is a need for school policies that acknowledge and respond to external cultural pressures—particularly digital influences—by promoting media literacy and value-critical engagement among students.

Future research may explore how different religious demographics shape teacher strategies for inclusive faith-based instruction. Investigations could also examine how schools navigate external societal changes while preserving internal mission coherence. Cross-institutional studies comparing implementation models could generate actionable frameworks for effective mission realization in diverse educational settings.

The Effectiveness of Vision in Students' Holistic Development (RQ3)

The study found that students exhibited positive moral, social, and spiritual growth as a result of mission-aligned teaching practices. Teachers reported enhanced student behaviors, such as increased empathy, honesty, and respect for diversity. Students were also more engaged in religious activities, including prayer, reflection, and scriptural discussion, indicating a deepening of spiritual awareness. These outcomes suggest that the school's Christian mission contributed meaningfully to the holistic development of students beyond academic performance.
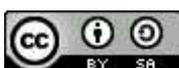
This finding reinforces prior literature on the transformative role of values-based education. As suggested by Nucci et al. (2014) and Weinberger & Patry (2016), moral and spiritual development is most effective when values are internalized through lived experiences rather than enforced through external rules. The effectiveness of routine faith practices and reflective classroom strategies in shaping behavior aligns with Chalwell (2025) assertion that holistic development occurs through consistent exposure to ethical models and spiritual environments. Furthermore, the positive behavioral indicators observed resonate with studies that affirm the link between school climate, values integration, and student social-emotional outcomes (Furco, 2023; Sayan, 2023).

One of the strengths of the study is its triangulated approach to data collection. The convergence of teacher-reported data, classroom observations, and quantitative trends provided credible insights into student development (Godfroid & Spino, 2015; Kern, 2018; Marlina et al., 2024; Nightingale, 2019; Sciberras & Dingli, 2023). The use of descriptive statistics to complement qualitative narratives also offered a balanced view of perceived effectiveness (Becerra et al., 2021; Green et al., 2022; Harbison & Simmons, 2024; Lušņičenko et al., 2024; Mishra et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the reliance on teacher perception introduces a subjective bias, and the absence of direct student voices limits the depth of understanding regarding internalization. Moreover, the study did not explore long-term outcomes, which could have added perspective on the sustainability of moral and spiritual development.

The implications of these findings are significant for school practice and policy. Schools should continue to embed spiritual reflection, character modeling, and value-oriented pedagogy across disciplines to promote student development. Teacher training should emphasize the role of faith-informed approaches in nurturing students' emotional intelligence and moral reasoning. Additionally, curriculum planners should incorporate regular opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection, community service, and interfaith dialogue to deepen moral awareness in diverse contexts.
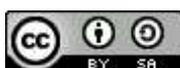
Future studies should include student perspectives and track developmental outcomes over time to evaluate the lasting impact of mission-driven instruction. Mixed-method longitudinal designs would be particularly useful for assessing the trajectory of holistic development and for refining best practices in faith-based education that aspire to form not only capable learners but also ethically grounded individuals.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study affirms the vital role of teachers and institutions in ensuring that the mission of Christian primary schools is reflected meaningfully in everyday pedagogical practice. By addressing how school missions are interpreted and enacted in classroom settings, the research aligns directly with its objectives: identifying mechanisms that support or hinder value integration and evaluating the impact on holistic student development. Findings from this study offer a foundation for actionable strategies in teacher training, curriculum planning, and school leadership. Christian schools are encouraged to deepen their investment in faith-integrated curricula, sustained professional formation, and collaborative partnerships with families. As a recommendation, future research should explore student perspectives and conduct longitudinal studies to better understand how early exposure to mission-aligned pedagogy shapes long-term character and spiritual identity. Strengthening the alignment between institutional mission and instructional practice is not only achievable but necessary for nurturing ethically grounded, spiritually aware, and socially responsible learners in Christian primary education.

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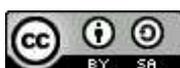
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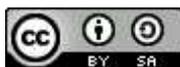
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