

Character Formation of Students through the Calling of Christian Religious Education Teachers at YPPGI Tagime Elementary School

Mordekai Wenda ¹, Jothan Samiun ², Lekius Yikwa ³

STT Levinus Rumaseb Sentani Papua, Indonesia ^{1,2,3}

Abstract

This journal aims to examine the significance of the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in shaping the character of students at SD YPPGI Tagime, with a focus on the dynamics of the Merdeka Curriculum that emphasizes student empowerment. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collection through observation, interviews, and the analysis of related literature. The findings of the study show that the role of CRE teachers is critical in shaping students' character, especially through Christian teachings, positive interpersonal relationships, and emotional and moral support. The professionalism of CRE teachers, combined with their creativity and innovation in teaching methods, significantly contributes to students' character development. This study provides important contributions to educational institutions to enhance the training and support of CRE teachers to maximize their role in shaping students' character at SD YPPGI Tagime.

Keywords:

Merdeka Curriculum,
Character Formation,
Christian Religious Education
Teacher,
Professionalism,
Christian Education.

Corresponding Author:

Mordekai Wenda
Email:
mordekaiwenda@gmail.com



This is an open access article under the CC BY license.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most essential elements in building a civilized society. One of the key aspects of education is character formation, which does not only emphasize intellectual intelligence but also moral, social, and spiritual development. In this context, teachers play a central role in educating and shaping the character of students. As educators, they are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also mentors who guide students to become responsible individuals with noble character and moral integrity. This role is particularly significant for Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, who are tasked not only with teaching religious knowledge but also with instilling Christian values in daily life.

In Indonesia, Christian schools such as SD YPPGI Tagime face major challenges in shaping students' character, especially amidst the rapid pace of societal changes. The development of technology, globalization, and shifts in social values present challenges for education to remain relevant and capable of shaping character in accordance with the demands of the times, while still maintaining the cultural and religious foundations on which education itself is built.

Within the framework of the newly implemented Merdeka Curriculum, emphasis on student empowerment and the development of individual potential has become highly important. This curriculum provides space for teachers to develop learning approaches that are more suited to students' needs, focusing more on character formation and holistic learning. Therefore, the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in this context becomes even more significant. CRE teachers are expected to instill Christian values not only through the lessons they teach but also through the behaviors and examples they demonstrate in daily life.

This study aims to explore more deeply how the vocation of CRE teachers can contribute to the character formation of students at SD YPPGI Tagime. Through this study, it is expected that a clearer understanding can be gained regarding the challenges, opportunities, and strategies that CRE teachers can employ to maximize their influence in shaping students' character, particularly within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which grants teachers greater freedom to develop more creative and innovative teaching methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The formation of students' character is one of the main goals of education, particularly in Christian schools. Character education refers to efforts to improve and shape students' behavior, attitudes, and moral values so that they grow into individuals with strong integrity who are able to make positive contributions to society. In the context of Christian Religious Education, character formation encompasses not only moral aspects but also spiritual ones, with the aim of helping students understand and internalize the teachings of Christ in their daily lives.

Several education experts have discussed the importance of character education in shaping individuals. According to Slamet Suyanto (2012), character education is a process aimed at instilling positive values in children, which in turn shapes their behavior in accordance with the moral values accepted by society. Suyanto explains that character is formed through holistic education, which includes teaching, role modeling, and experiences that positively impact students' moral development.

In the context of Christian Religious Education, character education goes beyond teaching general morality; it also emphasizes how to integrate Christ's teachings into daily life. Andar Ismail (2017) states that the vocation of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is not only to teach Christian religious subjects but also to serve as living role models by exemplifying Christian values in their lives. CRE teachers are expected to possess high integrity, act as mentors, and serve as role models for students in applying Christian teachings.

Taliaro Tafonao (2018) highlights the importance of the vocation of CRE teachers in building students' character in the digital era. In this context, CRE teachers face not only the challenge of teaching Christianity but also the task of addressing the negative influences of technology and social media that may affect students' character. Therefore, CRE teachers must have the skills to integrate Christian values with contemporary issues faced by students.

In this regard, Anton Nainggolan (2020) states that Christian character is a good character built upon faith in Jesus Christ. Character education in the Christian context includes the teaching of moral values such as love, honesty, empathy, and responsibility. This aligns with the concept of the vocation of CRE teachers, whose duty is not only to deliver subject material but also to instill these values in students' lives.

Maximizing Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum

Within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, character education has gained increasing attention. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the holistic development of students' potential, encompassing not only academic

aspects but also character formation aligned with cultural and religious values. In this regard, Christian religious education plays a vital role in shaping students' character by instilling values derived from the teachings of Christ.

The vocation of CRE teachers in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum also opens opportunities for teachers to develop more innovative learning approaches. For example, Jansen Sinamo (2021), in his work on teaching ethos, emphasizes that teachers with a noble calling to teach are not confined to the classroom but also play an active role in shaping students' character through extracurricular activities and other social interactions. Therefore, CRE teachers who embody their vocation can integrate moral values into every aspect of school life, not only within the formal learning process.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which allows the researcher to reveal the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in shaping students' character at SD YPPGI Tagime. This approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to explore phenomena in depth and to understand the social and cultural contexts that influence the interactions between teachers and students.

The qualitative research method is highly appropriate for this study as it focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the experiences of students, teachers, and other related stakeholders. Data were collected through several techniques, namely:

1. In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with CRE teachers, the principal, other teaching staff, and students. These interviews aimed to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding the role of CRE teachers in shaping students' character. The interviews also sought to identify the challenges faced by CRE teachers in teaching Christian values and fostering students' character.

2. Participant Observation

Observations were carried out in classrooms taught by CRE teachers to directly examine how they deliver material and how the interaction between teachers and students unfolds. This observation also enabled the researcher to document classroom dynamics and their influence on students' character formation.

3. Document Analysis

The researcher also collected documents related to the curriculum and learning activities at SD YPPGI Tagime, including Merdeka Curriculum documents, lesson plans, and school activity reports. Document analysis provided an overview of how CRE teachers design and implement learning that emphasizes character formation.

For data analysis, the researcher used a thematic analysis technique. This process involved identifying key themes that emerged from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Each theme was then examined to provide a deeper understanding of the role of CRE teachers in students' character formation. To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher also applied data triangulation by comparing data from various sources (teachers, students, and documents) in order to obtain a more comprehensive and accurate picture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime is highly significant in shaping students' character. CRE teachers serve not only as instructors of Christian

religion but also as role models, motivators, and mentors who influence the moral and spiritual development of students. Several key findings identified in this study are as follows:

1. Encouraging Creativity and Innovation in Learning

One important finding of this research is that the creativity and innovation applied by CRE teachers in their teaching methods greatly affect students' character formation. In today's digital era, CRE teachers need to utilize technology to create engaging and interactive learning experiences. As explained by one of the teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime, the use of digital media in Christian Religious Education helps students better understand religious teachings in a more enjoyable way. For instance, the use of videos, presentations, and online discussions allows students to relate Christian teachings to real-life contexts.

CRE teachers are also expected to introduce learning approaches that foster students' critical thinking. Some teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime use project-based learning, where students are required to work on group tasks that integrate Christian values into their lives, such as environmental cleanliness projects and social activities. In this way, students not only learn about Christian teachings but also apply these values in practical actions that shape their character.

2. The Vocation of CRE Teachers as Character Builders

The vocation of CRE teachers is a crucial aspect of students' character formation. CRE teachers are regarded not only as educators who deliver subject matter but also as figures who instill moral values rooted in Christian teachings. In an interview with the principal of SD YPPGI Tagime, it was explained that CRE teachers who live out their vocation with sincerity are able to provide good examples for students, particularly in honesty, compassion, and responsibility.

In this sense, the role of CRE teachers as role models is very important. Their behavior and actions serve as direct examples for students to follow. CRE teachers are expected to embody Christian values that emphasize love, forgiveness, and truth. Through such conduct, students find it easier to imitate and apply these values in their daily lives.

3. Building Positive Relationships with Students

One of the keys to successful character formation lies in the relationship between teachers and students. CRE teachers who are able to build positive and trusting relationships with students are more effective in shaping their character. In an interview with one of the teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime, it was noted that a good teacher-student relationship fosters more open communication. In this way, students feel comfortable sharing their problems or feelings, both in the learning context and in their personal lives.

For example, a CRE teacher at SD YPPGI Tagime always sets aside time after class to talk with students about issues they are facing. This not only supports students academically but also provides the emotional support they need in their character development.

4. Emotional Support in Character Formation

CRE teachers also provide crucial emotional support in shaping students' character. This support often takes the form of positive reinforcement, which helps students feel valued and empowered to grow. Emotional support may include informal counseling, offering positive feedback on student progress, or simply being a good listener when students encounter difficulties.

In an interview with the student council president of SD YPPGI Tagime, Omin Komba, it was mentioned that emotional support from CRE teachers is deeply felt by students, especially amid the challenges they face in daily life. Students feel that CRE teachers care not only about their academic achievements but also about their emotional

well-being. This indicates that emotional support plays a vital role in shaping students' character, which in turn affects how they interact with peers and their surroundings.

5. Serving as Positive Role Models

CRE teachers act as role models who provide concrete examples in everyday life. In an interview with one of the teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime, Benyamin Yikwa, he emphasized that being an example is an essential part of their responsibility as teachers. As CRE teachers, they must always maintain attitudes and behaviors that reflect Christ's teachings, because students observe and imitate what they see from their teachers.

CRE teachers who consistently demonstrate good behavior—such as patience, honesty, and compassion—create an environment that fosters students' character development. Through their example, students learn how to face life's challenges with love and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the formation of students' character through Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a vital role in creating a young generation with integrity and good character. The vocation of CRE teachers, when carried out with sincerity and professionalism, can significantly influence students in developing moral, spiritual, and social values that they bring into their daily lives.

CRE teachers serve not only as transmitters of Christian religious knowledge but also as role models who shape students' character through their actions. Through innovative teaching approaches, positive relationships with students, and the emotional support they provide, CRE teachers are able to maximize their role in fostering strong character in students.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of enhancing training and support for CRE teachers so they can continue to develop their professionalism in facing the challenges of modern times. With adequate support, CRE teachers will be able to act as agents of change who bring a positive impact on students' character formation at school.

Character education delivered by CRE teachers at SD YPPGI Tagime does not only focus on teaching Christian doctrine but also emphasizes the development of students' moral and social character. Therefore, it is crucial for Christian educational institutions to continuously support CRE teachers in their professional development so they may serve as role models whom students can follow.

REFERENCES

- Anthony, Michael J. *Introducing Christian Education: Fondasi Pendidikan Abad 21*. Malang: Gandum Mas, 2017.
- Baharuddin, M. R. "Adaptasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (Fokus: Model MBKM Program Studi)." *Jurnal Studi Guru Dan Pembelajaran*, 2021.
- Baron, J. "Actively Open-Minded Thinking in Politics." *Cognition* 188 (2019): 8–18.
- Brummelen, H. Van. *Walking with God in the Classroom*. 3rd ed. Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2009.
- Glori, Christien, Natalia Ponomban, dan Dina Kristiani, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Pembentukan Karakter Peserta Didik," *SIKIP: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, Volume 4, No 1, Pebruari 2023.
- Hasim, E. "Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Perguruan Tinggi Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19." *E-Prosiding Pascasarjana Universitas*, 2020.

- Jach, H K, and L D, Smillie. "To Fear or Fly to the Unknown: Tolerance for Ambiguity and Big Five Personality Traits." *Journal of Research in Personality* 79 (2019): 67–78.
- Jojo, A, and H Sihotang. "Analisis Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Mengatasi Learning Loss Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19 (Analisis Studi Kasus Kebijakan Pendidikan)." *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2022.
- Markes, Karlitu Dias, dan Eslye Esterina Londo, "Profesionalisme Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen yang Berkarakter Kristus", dalam *Bonafide: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen*, Vol 3 No 1 (2022). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46558/bonafide.v3i1.98>.
- Marsaulina, Roce, and Rajiman Sirait. "Kegiatan Pembinaan Kerohanian Kristen Di Lapas Anak Dan Wanita Kelas II Tangerang." *Jurnal PKM Setiadharma* 2, no. 2 SE-Articles (August 30, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.47457/jps.v2i2.155>.
- Pantan, F. "Pendidikan Yang Membebaskan: Sadar Akan Pluralitas Dalam Pendidikan Kristiani Di Era Posmodern." *Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 2022.
- Suyanto, Slamet. *Pendidikan Karakter untuk Anak Usia Dini*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2012.
- Tafonao, Taliaro. *Panggilan Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Membangun Karakter Siswa di Era Digital*. 2018.
- Windarti, Maria Titik. *Buku Ajar Kode Etik Profesionalisme Guru*. Sulawesi Tengah: Penerbit Feniks Muda Sejahtera, 2023.
- Sinamo, Jansen. *8 Etos Keguruan*. Jakarta: Institut Darma Mahardika, n.d.