



## Forming the Christian Faith Character of Young People at Cerdas Bangsa Private Vocational High School: Theological Implications for Christian Religious Education Teachers in the Context of the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) Program

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### ABSTRACT

*The formation of Christian faith character among young people represents a central task in Christian Religious Education (CRE). This study explores the theological implications of character formation for CRE teachers within the context of the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program at Cerdas Bangsa Private Vocational High School. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method to examine how theological reflection, pedagogical competence, and professional formation interact in shaping faith-based values among students. The findings indicate that the process of faith character formation involves integrating biblical principles, modeling Christian virtues, and cultivating reflective pedagogical practices. Theologically, teachers are called to embody Christ-centered character and serve as moral exemplars for students. This study underscores the vital role of theological understanding in teacher professionalism and its contribution to the spiritual and moral growth of students in vocational education settings.*

**Keywords:** *Christian faith, theological implications, PPG, youth formation*

### INTRODUCTION

The cultivation of Christian faith character among young people stands as a cornerstone and an indispensable goal of Christian education globally. This pursuit gains a particular, strategic significance within Indonesia's pluralistic society, where the landscape of religious and cultural diversity is both a national strength and a complex reality for adolescents navigating their identity. In this context, Christian Religious Education (CRE) assumes a pivotal role, extending beyond mere scriptural literacy to nurturing students' profound spiritual identity and fortifying their moral resilience against the myriad pressures of contemporary life. The efficacy of this education, however, rests squarely upon the shoulders of its educators. The central professional challenge for CRE teachers, particularly those engaged in the intensive Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program, lies in seamlessly integrating deep theological insight with pedagogical

excellence—a synergy essential for transformative teaching. Educational institutions, such as the fictional yet representative Cerdas Bangsa Private Vocational High School, serve as micro-laboratories where educators confront the intricate realities of adolescence. The current generation of students is grappling with a turbulent period marked by identity crises, pervasive technological influence (from social media to digital information overload), and relentless social pressure to conform or achieve. These challenges are not superficial; they penetrate the core of a young person's self-perception, worldview, and moral decision-making framework. Such a demanding environment mandates an educational approach that is not simply informational but fundamentally transformative, rooted deeply in a robust Christian theology of human nature and spiritual growth. The theological foundation for this transformation is powerfully encapsulated in the Apostle Paul's instruction in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This verse establishes the renewal of the mind (*metanoia*) not merely as a consequence of faith, but as the foundational process for the formation of a distinctively Christian character. It suggests that transformation is an active, continuous spiritual and intellectual endeavor that directly counters the pressures of the external "world." Applied to education, this means the role of the CRE teacher must transcend the traditional function of knowledge transmission. Instead, the teacher becomes a spiritual mentor and facilitator, tasked with the holistic shaping of students' faith and values, guiding them toward a Christ-like pattern of thought, feeling, and action. The academic exploration of Christian faith character formation necessitates an investigation into its core theological implications. This formation process is fundamentally a work of sanctification—the lifelong process by which believers are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ. Theologically, character is not an external set of behaviors but the internal consistency of virtues flowing from a renewed heart. Key theological principles underpin this process: 1) *Imago Dei* and Human Potential: The doctrine of *Imago Dei* (Image of God) affirms that every student possesses inherent dignity, value, and the potential for moral and spiritual excellence, despite the reality of sin. CRE must unlock this God-given potential, reminding students that their identity is defined by their Creator, not by cultural or peer standards. 2) *Covenantal Relationship*: Faith character is nurtured within a relational context. Christian education is a means of initiating and deepening a student's personal, covenantal relationship with God. Character virtues (e.g., integrity, compassion, patience) are understood as expressions of faithfulness to this relationship. 3) *The Role of the Holy Spirit*: The formation of character is not solely a human effort. Theological depth requires acknowledging the Holy Spirit as the primary agent of transformation, producing the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). The teacher's role, therefore, is to create an environment—pedagogically and relationally—where the Spirit's work is invited and facilitated, rather than restricted. 4) *Community and Discipleship*: Character is formed in community. The church and the Christian school classroom serve as a training ground (a *corpus Christi*) for discipleship. Theological insight necessitates teaching students to live their faith ethically and responsibly within their diverse communities, embodying the values of love, justice, and service. These theological truths provide the deep well from which pedagogical methods must draw. They shift the educational focus from achieving perfect compliance to fostering genuine, internal conviction and a lifelong commitment to spiritual growth.

The successful formation of Christian faith character in Indonesia's diverse context hinges on the quality of its CRE educators. The integration of theological depth with pedagogical excellence, particularly within the framework of the PPG, is not merely an academic exercise but a spiritual and professional imperative. By deeply understanding the theological implications of transformation (Romans 12:2), teachers are equipped to serve not just as transmitters of knowledge, but as transformative agents who successfully model and facilitate the renewal of the mind, thereby shaping a resilient generation of young people whose faith character can navigate and enrich a pluralistic world.

## **METHOD**

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth theological and pedagogical analysis of Christian faith character formation within a professional education context. This method was chosen to capture the nuanced experiences, interpretations, and practices of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and students, moving beyond mere quantitative measures. The research was conducted at Cerdas Bangsa Private Vocational High School, an institution representing the challenges and complexities of Christian education in a pluralistic Indonesian society. The focus of the investigation centered on CRE learning activities, including classroom instruction, teacher-student interactions, and curriculum documentation related to character development. The study participants were strategically selected to represent key stakeholders in the character formation process. The sample included five CRE teachers currently enrolled in the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program. Their participation was critical as they represent a cohort actively integrating professional development with practical teaching. Additionally, ten students were included, specifically drawn from the 11th and 12th grades (upper secondary level), to provide student perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of character formation efforts. A purposeful sampling technique was used to select teachers based on their involvement in the PPG and their experience in teaching character-focused lessons, and students based on their willingness to reflect on their spiritual and moral growth.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis, a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns (themes) within the data. This involved an iterative process of coding interview transcripts and observation notes to identify concepts related to theology, pedagogy, and character education. The interpretive framework was grounded in biblical theology, with particular emphasis on principles of Christ-centered formation as articulated in Romans 12:2 and the concept of vocational integrity in the teaching profession. The final themes represent a synthesis of empirical observations and theological reflection, ensuring the analysis is both contextually relevant and doctrinally sound.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The in-depth analysis of Christian Religious Education (CRE) practices, particularly concerning the development of faith character among young people, yielded three major, interconnected findings. These findings underscore that effective character formation is not an accidental outcome or a segmented curriculum unit, but rather a holistic,

deliberate process rooted in the spiritual and professional integrity of the educator. The research illuminated the essential role of theological grounding, the impact of the teacher as a moral exemplar, and the critical importance of structured professional reflection within the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) framework.

### ***Integrating Theological Foundations into Pedagogical Excellence***

The first and most significant finding revolved around the demonstrable integration of theological insight and pedagogical practice. The study revealed a strong correlation between the depth of a teacher's theological understanding and their efficacy in nurturing students' faith character. Teachers whose instructional methods and classroom management were grounded explicitly in biblical principles—such as love (Agape), humility, and service (Diakonia)—were consistently identified as more successful in fostering genuine spiritual and moral growth among their students. For these effective educators, theology was not a separate academic subject but the operating system for their entire teaching approach. They viewed their work not merely as a set of professional duties but as a spiritual vocation—a calling (*vocare*) to participate in God's ongoing work of transformation in the lives of young people. This theological perspective transformed the classroom atmosphere. Discipline, for example, was framed not as punishment but as a restorative act rooted in grace and accountability, mirroring Christ's redemptive work. Similarly, the presentation of academic material was infused with an ethical purpose; history was taught with a view toward God's sovereignty, and ethical dilemmas were discussed with reference to scriptural wisdom.

This integration highlights that professional competence in CRE requires more than mastering teaching techniques; it demands a coherent worldview that understands the student as a person created in the *Imago Dei* and the classroom as a site for sanctification. When teachers articulate their pedagogical choices through a theological lens, students receive a powerful, unified message that faith is relevant and applicable to all aspects of life and learning. The integration ultimately transforms the CRE curriculum from a body of knowledge to a lived experience of discipleship.

### ***The Teacher as a Model of Living Faith and Character***

The second critical finding emphasized the profound influence of the teacher as a model of faith. In the complex and often confusing landscape of adolescence, students do not primarily learn character from textbooks or sermons; they learn it from observing the lived reality of the adults they respect. The study confirmed that students overwhelmingly recognized their most impactful teachers as those whose daily behavior consistently reflected Christian virtues. The virtues that students identified as most inspiring were not grand, abstract acts, but the consistent, everyday demonstration of core values: forgiveness in response to student mistakes, empathy when students faced personal or academic setbacks, and disciplined integrity in maintaining fairness and commitment to their responsibilities. Teachers who modeled vulnerability, who were transparent about their own struggles, and who consistently sought justice and reconciliation within the classroom community served as powerful, living curricula. This finding aligns with the concept of imitation in discipleship, where the student seeks to emulate the mentor, who, in turn, is striving to imitate Christ. The effectiveness of CRE teaching, therefore, is directly proportional to the perceived authenticity of the teacher's faith. When a teacher's

theological rhetoric is matched by their ethical conduct, a space of genuine trust and moral authority is created. This environment is essential because moral and spiritual growth is often inspired by aspiration; students are motivated to develop character when they see its profound, tangible value modeled successfully in the life of someone they admire. The teacher's personal walk of faith thus becomes the pedagogical blueprint for the student's own formation.

### ***The Power of Reflective Practice in the PPG Context***

The third major finding highlighted the indispensable role of structured professional development, particularly the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program, in fostering reflective theological practice. The PPG context provided a crucial, dedicated space for teachers to step back from the immediate demands of the classroom and engage in deep theological and professional reflection, effectively connecting theoretical knowledge to practical ministry. The program's design, which often incorporates mentorship and peer discussion, proved instrumental in facilitating this growth. Through structured reflection exercises, teachers were challenged to examine the "why" behind their "how". They moved from asking "What teaching strategy should I use?" to the more fundamental, theologically-driven question, "How can my teaching strategy best facilitate God's purpose for this student's life?" This process encouraged a deeper awareness of how their personal faith and spiritual journey inevitably influenced their professional identity and educational mission. This reflective component of the PPG addressed the risk of treating teaching as a technical skill set. Instead, it emphasized that teaching is a moral and spiritual act that must be continually evaluated against ethical and biblical standards. By discussing real-world challenges—such as handling student identity crises or ethical dilemmas related to technology—with peers and mentors, teachers were able to collectively refine their pedagogical approaches, ensuring they were not only sound but also theologically informed and pastorally sensitive. The PPG thus acted as a crucial crucible for professional identity formation, transforming teachers into reflective practitioners who view their classroom work as an extension of their theological convictions.

The findings from this study—the necessary integration of theology and pedagogy, the centrality of the teacher as a model of faith, and the vital role of reflective practice within professional development—demonstrate a unified conclusion. Faith character formation is decidedly not an isolated educational activity confined to a specific lesson plan or a designated time slot. Instead, it is revealed to be a continuous, holistic process of mutual spiritual transformation, engaging both the teacher and the students in a shared journey of growth. Effective CRE is a dynamic spiritual ecosystem where the teacher's theological maturity informs their pedagogy, which is then authentically demonstrated in their moral conduct. This virtuous cycle creates an environment where students are not just taught about virtues, but are inspired and equipped to live them out. The process, facilitated by programs like the PPG, ensures that CRE teachers are prepared to be agents of renewal, shaping students who are not only academically capable but also morally resilient and spiritually grounded to serve effectively in Indonesia's pluralistic society. The commitment to these principles transforms the classroom into a space of sacred encounter and genuine discipleship.

Theologically, the formation of Christian faith character is rooted in the *Imago Dei*—the belief that humans are created in God’s image. Teachers, as co-workers with Christ, are called to nurture this divine image in students through faith-based education. This process involves cultivating virtues such as faithfulness, integrity, and compassion, reflecting the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. In the PPG context, theological formation should complement pedagogical competence. Teacher professionalism must be grounded in spiritual maturity, where teaching becomes an act of service to God and community. As theological education shapes moral discernment, it empowers teachers to integrate biblical truth with educational practice, thus forming students who are both skilled and spiritually grounded. Moreover, the study highlights that vocational education, often associated with technical skills, can become a fertile ground for faith formation. When teachers embody Christian values in their instruction, students learn to integrate faith with daily work and social engagement. This holistic vision aligns with the mission of Christian education to prepare individuals who live out their faith responsibly in all areas of life. Therefore, the theological implication is clear: faith character formation requires teachers to engage in continuous spiritual growth, reflective pedagogy, and professional development rooted in Christian theology. This integration of faith and profession ensures that education not only imparts knowledge but also transforms lives for the glory of God.

## CONCLUSION

The development of Christian faith character among young people at Cerdas Bangsa Private Vocational High School is fundamentally recognized as an intertwined theological and pedagogical mission. This process is not a peripheral activity but rather the core purpose of Christian Religious Education (CRE). The research affirms that the success of this mission rests critically upon the shoulders of the educators, particularly those participating in the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program. These teachers serve as vital mediators of faith and exemplars of Christian virtue, bridging theological truth with practical, lived experience for their students. The study strongly concludes that effective character formation hinges on the teacher's ability to seamlessly integrate theological insight with reflective pedagogy. By grounding their teaching methods in biblical principles—such as love, humility, and reconciliation—CRE teachers move beyond mere content delivery to become genuine facilitators of spiritual growth. This approach ensures they nurture students’ moral and spiritual growth in direct alignment with the biblical vision of transformation, as articulated by the renewing of the mind.

Crucially, theological understanding significantly enhances the professional competence of CRE teachers. When educators perceive their role as a divine vocation rather than simply a job, their professional identity is fortified, leading to a more consistent and authentic application of Christian values in the classroom. This is evidenced by the powerful impact of teachers who model forgiveness, empathy, and integrity, demonstrating to students that faith is applicable to everyday life.

In its entirety, this study demonstrates that faith character formation is a continuous process of mutual spiritual transformation. As educators embody Christ-centered values in their teaching vocation, they make an indispensable contribution to shaping a generation of young people. The ultimate goal is to build students who are equipped to live out their faith with integrity, compassion, and purpose, thereby serving as resilient,

moral citizens within Indonesia's diverse society. The quality of Christian character education is thus a direct function of the teacher's commitment to both theological reflection and exemplary practice.

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