



The Role of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Building Students' Character at SMP Negeri 1 Alasa through Learning Centered on Christian Values

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify, analyze, and examine the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in building students' character at SMP Negeri 1 Alasa through the implementation of learning centered on Christian values. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with CRE teachers and students, and analysis of curriculum documents and lesson plans. The findings indicate that CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Alasa apply various learning strategies based on Christian values such as love, honesty, and responsibility through multiple methods, including the use of Bible stories, storytelling, group discussions, assignments, reflective activities, and modeling. The implementation of Christian values is reflected in the students' behavior both inside and outside the classroom. The study concludes that CRE teachers play a significant role in shaping students' character through the integration of Christian values into the learning process. The application of these values has a positive impact on character formation, fostering moral awareness, mutual respect, and a stronger sense of responsibility. The study recommends that CRE teachers continue to develop innovative and student-centered teaching strategies and strengthen collaboration with parents and the school community to support students' character development.

Keywords: Role of CRE Teachers, Student Character, Christian Values

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential aspect of human life that cannot be separated from the pursuit of a meaningful and dignified existence. To achieve aspirations and a better quality of life, education serves as a primary avenue toward that goal. The success of education is influenced by various factors, one of which is the role of teachers. Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but also an art of shaping students' spiritual character. Its purpose extends beyond intellectual development—it aims to nurture cultured, moral, and character-driven individuals grounded in faith and national values based on Pancasila.

Character education is a crucial aspect in developing a high-quality young generation. In an era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, students face increasingly complex challenges such as global cultural influences, the rise of digital media, and the weakening of moral authority within families. These issues demand that Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play an active role in fostering students' character through positive cultural education grounded in Christian values and moral virtues, thereby strengthening their moral resilience and faith. Schools, as educational institutions, bear the responsibility of equipping students not only with academic knowledge but also with strong moral and ethical foundations. Within this context, Christian Religious Education plays a vital role in instilling Christian values as the foundation for character formation. CRE teachers hold a strategic role in internalizing Christian values such as love, honesty, responsibility, and tolerance among students. Learning centered on Christian values aims to develop students who are intellectually capable, morally upright, and able to contribute positively to society. As stated in Matthew 5:16, *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* This verse emphasizes the importance of being an example through good deeds—an integral aspect of Christian character.

SMP Negeri 1 Alasa, located in North Nias Regency, envisions producing graduates who are faithful, devoted, and of strong character. To achieve this vision, the role of CRE teachers is essential in developing students' character through learning rooted in Christian values. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Alasa implement Christian values in their teaching and the impact of such practices on students' character formation. Teachers play a pivotal role in education, especially as primary mentors in shaping students' character and personality. For Christian Religious Education teachers in particular, this task carries a special dimension—instilling spiritual, moral, and intellectual values based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Beyond delivering knowledge, CRE teachers nurture faith, spirituality, and religious character so that students grow into individuals of integrity.

Character education, implemented through modeling, guidance, and peaceful approaches, aims to produce students who are not only academically competent but also morally steadfast. As written in Colossians 3:12, *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."* This passage underscores the importance of embodying Christlike attributes in daily life, including love, forgiveness, and humility. The role of CRE teachers is therefore fundamental in shaping students' character to face modern moral challenges. Through an integrative approach that unites academic learning with the practice of Christian values, teachers can help students internalize life principles rooted in love, justice, and truth. Religious education thus serves not only to promote spiritual transformation but also to strengthen moral and ethical development. In fulfilling their calling, CRE teachers serve both as educators and as God's messengers, equipping students with knowledge, faith, and moral integrity. Bible-based religious education reinforces students' moral foundations and encourages them to embody Christian virtues in their daily lives. According to the Republic of Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, education is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process in which students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the necessary skills

for themselves, society, nation, and state. Character education is a deliberate and planned effort to instill noble values so that students possess good character (Ministry of National Education, 2010). In the context of Christian education, Christian values derived from the Bible—such as love (John 13:34–35), honesty (Proverbs 12:22), forgiveness (Matthew 6:14–15), humility (Philippians 2:3), and responsibility (Romans 12:11)—serve as the essential foundation for students' character formation.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, which enabled the researcher to explore information in depth and provide a comprehensive and detailed depiction of the pedagogical competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and its impact on students' learning outcomes. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a holistic understanding of complex educational phenomena, capturing both the observable behaviors and the underlying processes that shape teaching and learning in the classroom. Data collection was carried out using multiple methods to ensure triangulation and increase the validity and reliability of the findings. First, questionnaires were administered to both CRE teachers and students. These instruments were carefully designed to assess various aspects of teachers' pedagogical competence, including lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, and the ability to integrate moral and spiritual values into learning. The questionnaires also gathered information on students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness and their own learning outcomes.

In addition to questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain richer qualitative data. These interviews provided insights into participants' experiences, opinions, and reflections regarding the pedagogical competence of teachers, revealing both strengths and challenges in instructional practices. Interview data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, allowing the researcher to identify recurring themes, patterns, and significant narratives that illustrate how teachers' pedagogical competence influences student engagement and learning. Classroom observations formed another critical component of the data collection process. During observations, the researcher documented how teachers applied their pedagogical skills in real-time, including their use of teaching methods, interactions with students, and the integration of Christian values into lessons. Field notes complemented the observational data, providing contextual information and a detailed record of classroom dynamics.

Finally, to measure the tangible learning outcomes of students, a post-observation achievement test was administered. This test evaluated students' comprehension and retention of Christian Religious Education material, providing quantitative data that could be analyzed alongside qualitative findings. Questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistical techniques to summarize trends and patterns, while qualitative data from interviews and observations were synthesized to present a nuanced understanding of the pedagogical process. Overall, the combination of questionnaires, interviews, observations, and achievement tests allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the pedagogical competence of CRE teachers and its direct and indirect impact on student learning outcomes, highlighting the critical role of effective

teaching in fostering both academic achievement and spiritual development in the classroom.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers serve a multifaceted role as educators, entrusted not only with the delivery of knowledge but also with the holistic formation of students' character, faith, and moral values. Their primary responsibility is to guide students in growing spiritually and nurturing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This role transcends conventional academic teaching; it involves shaping students into individuals who embody ethical, moral, and spiritual integrity. As emphasized in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it," early character education is essential for fostering lifelong moral and spiritual development. By instilling these values from a young age, CRE teachers lay a foundation for students to grow into responsible, conscientious, and morally grounded individuals. Beyond imparting knowledge, CRE teachers also function as mentors and spiritual guides. They are tasked with identifying and nurturing the unique talents and gifts of each student, in line with the principle expressed in 1 Peter 4:10: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." By helping students discover their individual strengths, teachers cultivate not only academic competence but also a sense of purpose, responsibility, and service toward others. This mentoring role encompasses both personal guidance and moral coaching, enabling students to navigate challenges while adhering to Christian ethical standards. In addition to mentorship, CRE teachers serve as exemplars of Christlike behavior. Their conduct, attitude, and integrity function as a living curriculum through which students learn moral and spiritual principles. As stated in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity," teachers are encouraged to model behaviors that reflect the teachings of Christ, demonstrating love, honesty, humility, and faithfulness. Students are highly influenced by the examples set by teachers they admire; therefore, consistency between what teachers say and what they do is critical. Modeling values through personal behavior often leaves a more lasting impression than theoretical instruction alone. Creating a positive and inclusive learning environment is another fundamental aspect of a CRE teacher's role. Such an environment encourages open dialogue, mutual respect, and collaborative learning, fostering students' socio-emotional development alongside spiritual growth. By nurturing a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere, teachers empower students to express themselves freely, develop critical thinking skills, and engage meaningfully with ethical and moral dilemmas. The combination of role modeling, mentorship, and a nurturing classroom culture ensures that students internalize values in a practical and relatable manner, promoting both spiritual maturity and holistic personal development. Ultimately, the role of CRE teachers as educators is both profound and strategic. Through instruction, mentorship, modeling, and the cultivation of a supportive learning environment, teachers actively contribute to the development of students who are not only academically competent but also morally upright, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible. This comprehensive approach underscores the transformative impact of Christian Religious

Education in shaping well-rounded individuals capable of embodying Christian values in their daily lives and broader communities.

Teacher as Mentor

Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a critical role as mentors, guiding students not only in academic learning but also in personal and spiritual development. As mentors, CRE teachers act as supportive companions in the learning process, helping students navigate both educational and life challenges. This mentoring role is deeply rooted in biblical principles, such as Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This passage emphasizes the importance of empathy, mutual support, and community care, highlighting the teacher's responsibility to assist students in managing their difficulties and achieving holistic growth. In their role as mentors, CRE teachers provide both individual and group guidance tailored to students' specific needs. Each student possesses unique talents, interests, and learning styles, and effective mentorship requires recognizing and nurturing these individual differences. By offering personalized attention, teachers can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, set realistic goals, and develop actionable plans for academic and personal success. This process fosters self-awareness, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility, equipping students to face challenges proactively rather than passively. CRE teachers also create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their struggles, concerns, and aspirations. This safe space encourages open communication, allowing students to express themselves honestly without fear of judgment. Mentorship in this context goes beyond academic instruction; it involves guiding students in ethical decision-making, helping them reflect on the consequences of their choices, and integrating Christian values into their daily lives. Teachers provide not only advice but also practical strategies to navigate challenges, promoting resilience and critical thinking.

Empathy and active listening are central to the mentor-student relationship. A teacher's ability to listen attentively and respond thoughtfully demonstrates care and validation, which can significantly influence students' emotional and moral development. By modeling empathetic behavior, CRE teachers teach students how to approach interpersonal relationships with understanding, patience, and respect. This guidance helps students internalize the values of compassion, responsibility, and integrity, which are essential for personal growth and for contributing positively to society. Moreover, mentoring extends to long-term guidance in preparing students for future opportunities. Teachers help students explore potential career paths, develop life skills, and set goals that align with their abilities and Christian ethical principles. They encourage students to reflect on their purpose, cultivate meaningful relationships, and pursue excellence in all aspects of life. By combining academic support with spiritual and moral guidance, CRE teachers ensure that mentorship contributes to the formation of well-rounded individuals capable of making ethical decisions, overcoming challenges, and living purposefully.

Teacher as Facilitator

As facilitators, CRE teachers encourage students to learn independently and responsibly while creating a conducive, interactive, and enjoyable learning environment. Teachers do more than deliver information; they connect biblical teachings with students' real-life

experiences. Through case studies, group discussions, and creative activities, teachers help students understand and apply Christian values in everyday life. Interactive and participatory learning is more effective for internalizing these values. For example, when discussing love and forgiveness, teachers may relate biblical lessons to contemporary issues such as school bullying, demonstrating how students can practice forgiveness in real-life scenarios. CRE teachers encounter multiple challenges in cultivating students' character through Christian values, arising from internal, external, and environmental factors. Teachers require deep understanding of the Bible, theology, and child psychology. However, not all teachers have sufficient education or professional development opportunities, which may hinder their ability to link biblical teachings with students' real-life experiences. High motivation and commitment are essential for teachers, yet factors such as heavy workloads, lack of recognition, or inadequate school support can reduce enthusiasm, affecting teaching quality and inspiration for students. Students' perceptions of CRE teachers vary and are influenced by personal experiences, family background, and the surrounding environment. Negative perceptions can impede learning and value internalization. Students increasingly encounter secular and materialistic values, which can make it challenging to accept and practice Christian teachings. Rapid technological and social changes require teachers to connect biblical teachings with the realities of students' lives in a digital and globalized context. Academic pressures, family issues, and social media influence can affect students' mental health. Teachers need skills to understand, support, and guide students while reinforcing Christian values. Adequate support from schools, such as teaching resources, time allocation, and recognition, is crucial. Insufficient support can limit teachers' effectiveness. Parents' views may conflict with teachers' teachings, potentially causing tension in character education. Teachers must communicate effectively and collaborate with parents to guide students. Social discrimination against Christianity in some areas may create an unsafe environment for students. CRE teachers must provide guidance and support to maintain students' faith and resilience. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among teachers, schools, parents, and the community. Teachers should enhance their competence and professionalism, schools must provide support, parents should participate actively, and society should foster a tolerant and respectful environment.

Planting Christian Values

At SMP Negeri 1 Alasa, CRE teachers actively and consistently instill fundamental Christian values. These values are not taught merely as theoretical concepts but are integrated into students' daily lives. Key values emphasized include:

1. Love (Agape): Teachers emphasize unconditional love for God and others, encouraging students to help one another, respect differences, and forgive mistakes. Biblical stories, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, are used to illustrate love in action.
2. Honesty: Teachers promote integrity and honesty in all aspects of life, guiding students to speak truthfully, avoid cheating, and take responsibility for their actions, modeling these behaviors themselves.
3. Tolerance: In Indonesia's diverse context, students are taught to respect differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture, fostering positive interactions and preventing discrimination.

4. Responsibility: Teachers cultivate awareness of personal, familial, societal, and spiritual responsibilities, encouraging students to complete tasks diligently, care for their environment, and contribute positively to school activities.

The integration of these values demonstrates a systematic effort by CRE teachers to combine theological knowledge with practical application, shaping students' character through love, honesty, tolerance, and service. Teachers act not only as facilitators but also as role models inspiring students to live according to Christ's teachings.

CONCLUSION

The role of CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Alasa is vital in building students' character through learning centered on Christian values. Despite facing various challenges, with appropriate methods and contextual approaches, teachers successfully instill moral values that shape students' personalities. The positive impact extends beyond students to the broader school environment, highlighting the need for collective support from parents and the community to maximize the teachers' role in character education.

Key outcomes include: 1) Students develop responsibility, caring for themselves, others, and their environment. 2) Students cultivate humility and a spirit of service, understanding life as giving and helping others. 3) Teachers act as partners with parents, maintaining open communication and collaboration to ensure optimal character development. 4) CRE teachers strategically prepare a new generation of strong, faithful, and morally upright citizens. Through the integration of Christian values, modeling, guidance, and effective teaching, CRE teachers help students grow into individuals of faith, integrity, and responsibility. Christian character education prepares students not only for life in this world but also for eternal life with God.

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