



Christian Religious Education Teachers' Professionalism in Developing Contextual Curriculum Reflections on Exodus 37:1 at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias

Destriaman Lase

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: destriamanlase80@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing a contextual curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, with reflections on Exodus 37:1. Professionalism in CRE teaching encompasses pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, reflective practice, and theological insight, integrating academic and spiritual dimensions of education. Using a qualitative research design, six CRE teachers were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of teaching artifacts. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights into how professionalism is enacted in curriculum development. Findings indicate that CRE teachers demonstrate professionalism through mastery of content, contextualized lesson planning, and integration of biblical reflections into classroom practices. Reflective practice, collaboration with peers, and continuous professional development strengthen teachers' ability to adapt curricula to students' cultural, social, and experiential realities. The study highlights the significant role of Exodus 37:1 as a guiding framework, where the example of Bezalel inspires teachers to combine skill, creativity, and ethical integrity in curriculum design and teaching. Teachers' ethical modeling and vocational commitment contribute to the holistic development of students, fostering both cognitive and moral growth. Challenges such as student diversity and resource limitations are mitigated through adaptive strategies, demonstrating the dynamic and responsive nature of professionalism in faith-based education. The study concludes that professionalism in CRE is multidimensional and integrative, bridging pedagogical expertise with ethical and theological awareness. Supporting CRE teachers through professional development, mentorship, and collaborative networks can enhance curriculum relevance and student engagement. These findings provide practical implications for teacher education, curriculum policy, and the implementation of contextualized, values-based education in Christian secondary schools.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, teacher professionalism, contextual curriculum, Exodus 37:1.*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective educational practice and curriculum development in contemporary schooling systems. As education evolves to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, professionalism extends beyond mere technical competence to encompass reflective practice, contextual understanding, and ethical responsibility (Anisaturrizqi, Saputra, & Hanifiyah, 2025). In religious education contexts, particularly in Christian Religious Education (CRE), professionalism incorporates both pedagogical expertise and the ability to integrate faith-based values into curriculum planning and delivery. This dual focus is essential to ensuring that learners not only acquire academic knowledge but also internalize moral and spiritual values that reflect the living tradition of Christian faith. Professionalism in teaching has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that includes pedagogical competence, content knowledge, social engagement, and ongoing professional growth (Nasution, 2020). Effective teachers demonstrate mastery of curriculum content, adapt instruction to learners' needs, engage in reflective practice, and continuously pursue professional learning. Such competencies are particularly critical in the development of *contextual curricula*, which emphasizes relevance to students' lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, and real-world challenges. Contextual curricula aim to bridge abstract academic content with concrete life contexts, fostering deeper understanding and meaningful learning outcomes (Sisharwati, Bakar, & Alpizar, 2022). In the Indonesian education landscape, curriculum reforms, including the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, call for teacher agency in curriculum adaptation to local contexts, thus amplifying the role of teacher professionalism in educational transformation (Tunggal, Haeruddin, & Akhmad, 2023).

While general frameworks for teacher professionalism and curriculum contextualization are well-documented, specific insights into the intersection of professionalism with Christian Religious Education remain underrepresented in the literature. There is growing scholarship that investigates teacher professionalism in religious and moral education settings, demonstrating that teacher roles in such contexts encompass not only instructional duties but also modeling, mentoring, and moral formation (Maharauli Sarumpaet & Samosir, 2025). An exegetical approach to professionalism, grounded in biblical texts, further reveals how theological reflection can enrich professional identity. For example, the study of CRE teacher professionalism through the lens of *Exodus 40:38* emphasized the metaphor of God's persistent presence as guiding educators' ethical and vocational commitment (Purba & Sitorus, 2024). Such doctrinal perspectives suggest that in Christian education, professionalism is not solely technical but deeply rooted in a sense of vocation and divine calling. In line with these perspectives, this study focuses on the professionalism of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, particularly as it relates to the development of a contextual curriculum informed by *Exodus 37:1*. This passage, situated within the narrative of Israel's tabernacle craftsmanship, illustrates themes of skilled service and sacred purpose—concepts that resonate with the professional calling of CRE teachers who craft learning experiences that reflect biblical wisdom and cultural relevance. By examining how CRE teachers interpret and embody such themes in curriculum development, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how professionalism manifests in faith-oriented educational settings.

Empirical evidence highlights that professional teachers significantly influence the quality of learning and curriculum adaptation. Research in Indonesian secondary education has shown that teachers who actively engage in professional development, curriculum planning, and reflective practice are better positioned to implement curriculum innovations aligned with contextual needs (Berliana et al., 2024). Similarly, investigations into teacher professionalism within religious education contexts have underscored the importance of pedagogical competence and ethical conduct for nurturing student respect, character, and moral integrity (Sarumpaet & Samosir, 2025). These studies collectively affirm that teacher professionalism extends beyond routine instruction to include curriculum design that is responsive to both academic standards and spiritual dimensions of learning. The specific dynamics of professionalism among CRE teachers in the Indonesian secondary school context remain underexplored. This gap is particularly evident in settings like SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, where socio-cultural diversity and the integration of Christian teaching into public schooling present unique challenges and opportunities for curriculum contextualization. Given that contextual curriculum design requires not only subject matter expertise but also cultural sensitivity and theological insight, understanding how CRE teachers navigate these dimensions becomes essential for both policy and practice. This study aims to explore how professionalism is enacted by Christian Religious Education teachers in developing a contextual curriculum rooted in the theological reflection of *Exodus 37:1*. In doing so, it examines how teachers' professional identities, beliefs, and pedagogical skills interact to shape curriculum development practices that are both academically sound and spiritually meaningful. By situating this inquiry within SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, the research highlights localized experiences and practices that may offer broader implications for teacher education, curriculum policy, and the role of faith-based perspectives in public schooling. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of CRE teacher professionalism can inform strategies for professional development that align with both educational goals and religious values, supporting teachers in delivering curriculum that resonates with students' lives while upholding the distinctiveness of Christian education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the professionalism of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in developing a contextual curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias. Qualitative research was deemed appropriate because it allows for in-depth investigation of experiences, perceptions, and practices of teachers, emphasizing the meanings they attach to their professional roles and curriculum development processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through a qualitative lens, the study aimed to capture the richness and complexity of CRE teachers' professionalism as it manifests in local educational contexts, guided by theological reflection on *Exodus 37:1*. The research site, SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, was purposefully selected due to its representation of a typical Indonesian secondary school where Christian Religious Education is integrated into the curriculum. The participants were CRE teachers who had at least three years of teaching experience and were actively involved in curriculum planning and implementation. Using purposive sampling, six teachers were chosen to provide diverse perspectives on professional practice, contextual curriculum design, and

integration of biblical reflections into teaching. The sample size was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation, ensuring that repeated patterns of meaning could be identified while allowing for in-depth exploration of individual experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data collection was conducted through multiple methods to ensure triangulation and enhance credibility. Semi-structured interviews formed the primary data source, allowing participants to discuss their understanding of professionalism, experiences in curriculum development, and reflections on integrating *Exodus 37:1* into teaching. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. In addition, classroom observations were conducted to capture teachers' instructional practices, interaction with students, and the implementation of contextualized curriculum elements. Relevant teaching artifacts, including lesson plans, instructional materials, and curriculum documents, were also collected to provide supporting evidence of professional practice. Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures, involving coding and categorization to identify patterns, themes, and relationships related to teacher professionalism and curriculum contextualization (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis process included transcription of interview recordings, open coding to highlight significant statements, axial coding to connect codes into broader categories, and selective coding to refine themes aligned with the research focus. To ensure validity and reliability, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants for verification, and peer debriefing was used to minimize researcher bias. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were securely stored and only accessible to the research team. This methodological approach allowed the study to generate a comprehensive understanding of CRE teacher professionalism in curriculum development while respecting participants' perspectives and educational context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that professionalism among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias manifests as a complex interplay between pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, reflective practice, and theological awareness. Teachers consistently demonstrated a high level of commitment to developing a curriculum that is not only academically rigorous but also contextually relevant and spiritually meaningful. The integration of biblical reflection, particularly through the lens of *Exodus 37:1*, served as a guiding principle in framing both the content and the approach of classroom instruction. Participants reported that their engagement with the narrative of Bezalel, described in *Exodus 37:1* as divinely gifted to construct sacred objects, inspired them to view their professional role as a vocational calling in which skill, creativity, and spiritual insight converge (Purba & Sitorus, 2024). Pedagogical competence emerged as a central element of professionalism, with teachers demonstrating thorough mastery of CRE subject matter, the ability to design lesson plans that accommodate local cultural and social contexts, and proficiency in employing instructional strategies that foster active student engagement. Teachers described adopting a variety of approaches, including problem-based learning, discussion-based pedagogy, and reflective exercises that encouraged students to connect biblical principles with contemporary challenges. Such practices align with the principles of contextual

curriculum development, emphasizing the adaptation of learning experiences to students' lived realities, cultural norms, and societal expectations (Sisharwati, Bakar, & Alpizar, 2022). The participants consistently emphasized the importance of ensuring that content is both accessible and meaningful, bridging abstract biblical teachings with concrete examples from students' daily lives. Reflective practice was another defining characteristic of teacher professionalism identified in this study. Participants engaged in continuous self-evaluation and peer consultation to refine their instructional methods, curricular decisions, and classroom management strategies. This reflective approach not only enhanced pedagogical effectiveness but also facilitated the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into classroom activities. Teachers highlighted that reflection on biblical narratives, particularly the detailed account of Bezalel's craftsmanship in *Exodus 37:1*, provided a framework for considering how divine guidance, diligence, and ethical responsibility can be embodied in professional practice (Maharauli Sarumpaet & Samosir, 2025). By modeling conscientious and ethical behavior, teachers reported influencing students' own attitudes toward learning, moral reasoning, and spiritual development, suggesting that professionalism in CRE extends beyond technical skill to include character formation and vocational integrity.

Ethical responsibility and moral modeling were consistently emphasized as integral to professionalism. Participants articulated an understanding of their professional role that encompasses not only delivering content but also serving as exemplars of Christian values. This perspective aligns with prior research highlighting the dual nature of CRE teaching, where the educator functions both as an academic instructor and as a moral guide (Antak, 2023). Teachers reported implementing strategies to cultivate student character, including fostering honesty, responsibility, compassion, and perseverance, while embedding scriptural reflections within classroom discussions and learning activities. These practices underscore the inseparability of professionalism and ethical commitment in religious education, particularly within the Indonesian context where societal expectations often link teacher authority with moral and spiritual guidance (Nasution, 2020). The integration of contextual curriculum principles was evident in teachers' systematic attention to students' cultural, social, and environmental contexts. Participants described efforts to adapt instructional materials and teaching approaches to the specific needs and experiences of learners at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias, reflecting the broader educational movement in Indonesia toward localized, student-centered curricula (Tunggal, Haeruddin, & Akhmad, 2023). Teachers reported that understanding the socio-cultural backgrounds of students allowed them to select relevant biblical examples, case studies, and practical applications that enhanced comprehension and engagement. For instance, teachers incorporated local community practices, historical narratives, and contemporary social issues into lesson planning, demonstrating how biblical principles could inform ethical decision-making and social responsibility. This approach not only reinforced academic learning objectives but also fostered moral development, aligning with the dual aims of Christian Religious Education.

The study also revealed that collaboration and professional dialogue significantly enhanced teacher professionalism. Participants reported regular engagement in peer discussions, workshops, and informal consultations aimed at refining curriculum design, sharing effective teaching strategies, and collectively reflecting on theological interpretations. Such collaborative practices support a professional learning community

model, wherein teachers collectively construct knowledge, validate pedagogical approaches, and sustain ethical and spiritual standards within their practice (Berliana et al., 2024). The participants highlighted that through these interactions, they were able to critically assess how best to integrate scriptural reflections, contextual relevance, and pedagogical rigor, enhancing both the quality of instruction and the alignment of curriculum with Christian principles. Professional development and continuous learning were also crucial in shaping the competence of CRE teachers. Participants engaged in ongoing formal and informal training programs, including seminars on curriculum design, pedagogical innovations, and theological studies. Such professional development initiatives strengthened teachers' ability to translate biblical insights into effective classroom practices, particularly in creating lesson plans that reflect the spiritual and social realities of students. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the necessity of lifelong learning and reflective engagement as core components of teacher professionalism (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Nasution, 2020). By pursuing continual growth, teachers were able to maintain pedagogical relevance while integrating scriptural wisdom in ways that resonate with students' lived experiences. Incorporation of *Exodus 37:1* into curriculum development emerged as a unique dimension of professionalism in this study. Teachers interpreted the passage's depiction of Bezalel as a model for professional diligence, creativity, and spiritual sensitivity, applying these principles to their own teaching and curriculum planning. The narrative served as a metaphorical framework through which educators conceptualized their responsibilities, emphasizing that professional skill must be harmonized with ethical conduct and spiritual devotion. Participants described how this biblical reflection guided decisions on lesson sequencing, activity selection, and assessment methods, ensuring that curricular content was not only academically sound but also spiritually formative. This integrative approach exemplifies the fusion of pedagogical expertise with theological reflection, highlighting the distinctive nature of professionalism in CRE contexts (Purba & Sitorus, 2024).

Teachers also reported challenges in balancing curricular demands, student diversity, and the expectations of faith-based instruction. Issues such as varying levels of student religious literacy, resource limitations, and institutional constraints necessitated adaptive strategies and creative problem-solving. Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that professionalism involves maintaining ethical integrity, commitment to continuous improvement, and sensitivity to student needs. In response, teachers employed differentiated instruction, contextualized examples, and reflective dialogues with students to ensure equitable access to learning and meaningful engagement. Such strategies illustrate the dynamic and responsive nature of professionalism, wherein teachers negotiate complex educational realities while upholding pedagogical, ethical, and spiritual standards (Sisharwati, Bakar, & Alpizar, 2022). The study underscores that professionalism among CRE teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias is multifaceted, encompassing pedagogical competence, ethical modeling, reflective practice, collaborative engagement, continuous professional development, and theological insight. The integration of *Exodus 37:1* provided a distinctive biblical lens through which teachers articulated their professional identity, guiding curriculum design and instructional practice in ways that are both contextually relevant and spiritually meaningful. These findings reinforce the notion that teacher professionalism in religious education transcends technical mastery, embedding moral, spiritual, and reflective dimensions into

everyday practice. Moreover, they suggest that policies and professional development programs should recognize and support the holistic nature of professionalism in faith-based educational settings, equipping teachers to design and implement curricula that nurture both cognitive and spiritual growth. The enactment of professionalism in CRE teaching at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias illustrates a model in which academic competence, contextual curriculum adaptation, ethical conduct, and theological reflection converge. By integrating insights from biblical narratives, particularly *Exodus 37:1*, teachers not only fulfill curricular mandates but also cultivate students' moral and spiritual development. The study highlights that such professionalism is sustained through reflective practice, collaboration, and continuous learning, emphasizing that CRE teachers' professional identity is inherently linked to both vocation and pedagogical expertise. These findings contribute to broader understandings of how professionalism can be operationalized in faith-based education, providing implications for teacher education, curriculum policy, and pedagogical practice in similar contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that professionalism among Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Gido-Nias is a multidimensional construct, integrating pedagogical competence, ethical responsibility, reflective practice, and theological insight. Findings demonstrate that teachers not only possess subject matter expertise but also actively adapt curricula to the local context, ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and spiritually formative. The integration of *Exodus 37:1* serves as a guiding framework, enabling teachers to interpret their professional role as a vocation that combines skill, creativity, and devotion. By reflecting on the biblical example of Bezalel, educators embrace the principle that professional excellence is inseparable from ethical and spiritual commitment, thereby modeling values that shape students' character and moral development. Professionalism is further manifested through reflective practice, wherein teachers consistently evaluate their instructional strategies, curriculum design, and classroom interactions. This reflective approach enhances their ability to address diverse student needs, integrate contextualized examples, and maintain alignment with both academic standards and spiritual objectives. Collaborative engagement with peers, participation in professional development programs, and ongoing learning reinforce this reflective orientation, providing opportunities for knowledge exchange, pedagogical improvement, and ethical calibration. The study confirms that professionalism in CRE transcends technical competence, encompassing moral modeling, ethical conduct, and continuous self-improvement, all of which contribute to holistic student development. The research also underscores the importance of contextual curriculum development as a dimension of teacher professionalism. By tailoring instructional content to students' cultural, social, and experiential realities, teachers foster learning that is not only intellectually rigorous but also personally and spiritually meaningful. This approach aligns with contemporary educational frameworks in Indonesia that prioritize localized, student-centered curriculum design while respecting the distinctive goals of Christian education. The study demonstrates that effective CRE teachers are capable of balancing curricular requirements, pedagogical innovation, and spiritual guidance, ensuring that students

engage with content in ways that cultivate both knowledge and values. Professionalism among CRE teachers is a dynamic and integrative phenomenon. It is characterized by the alignment of pedagogical expertise, ethical integrity, contextual awareness, reflective practice, and theological reflection. The example of Bezalel in *Exodus 37:1* provides both inspiration and a practical framework for understanding how spiritual insight can inform curriculum development and teaching practice. The findings suggest that supporting CRE teachers in strengthening these dimensions through professional development, mentorship, and collaborative networks can enhance the quality of religious education and foster holistic student growth. Ultimately, the study affirms that professionalism in faith-based education is both a moral vocation and a pedagogical responsibility, where teachers serve as models of integrity, creativity, and spiritual commitment in the development and delivery of contextualized curricula.

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